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SCRIPTURE HISTORY;

WITH

THE LIVES OF THE APOSTLES,

&c.

BY E. MILLER.

DESIGNED FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF YOUTH.

THE ORIGINAL EDITION,

ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

ILLUSTRATED BY UPWARDS OF TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY ENGRAVINGS,

EACH ACCOMPANIED BY POETICAL EXPLANATIONS.

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In Eden's amaranthine bowers;
With innocence and love:
Blest Adam spent his happy hours
In joys like those above.

SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

THE CREATION.

BEFORE CHRIST 4004 YEARS.

Behold the mighty power of God,
  That made the lofty mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad,
  And built the arch'd and azure skies.

IT was by the almighty power of God, that the globe on which we dwell, with all its beautiful variety, was formed out of nothing; and in every thing which his hand has made we behold his infinite wisdom. Universal chaos abounded, but God said, "*Let there be light, and there was light.*" He made the bright sun that rules the

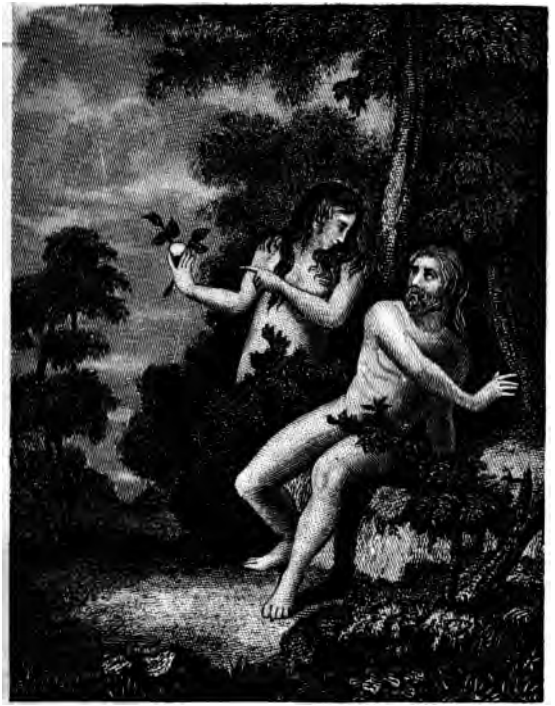
day; the pale moon that governs the night; with all the host of stars that adorn the sky; the heavens above, and the earth beneath, are his workmanship; he formed every beast that walks the earth, every bird that wings the air, every fish that swims through the sea, and the minutest insect that moves: all are of his creating, and all bespeak his power. The fruitful trees, the lovely flowers, the useful herbs, were all produced by his word; and the beautiful variety, and order of all his works, demand our admiration and praise; for who but a God of infinite power could have done all this? But of all his works, the creation of man far exceeds the rest—made in his Maker's image, made to have dominion over all created things,—and endowed with intellectual powers of inestimable worth. Man, though formed of

the dust of the earth, is the noblest part of God's creation, because enriched with a never-dying soul: and of a rib taken from man's side, while in a deep sleep, was woman made to be a companion for him.

When Adam first beheld Eve, the fair partner of his life, who was presented to him by her Almighty creator, he was struck with a secret sympathy, and finding her of his own likeness and complexion, he exclaimed with rapture, "*This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.*" Gen. ii. 23. He easily foresaw that the love and union which was now to take place between them was to be lasting.

When God reviewed all that his hand had formed, he pronounced it very good; for it was all suited to the various ends designed, and perfect. Thus God in six days

made the heavens and the earth and all that therein is; and when we look around and behold what his hand hath wrought, we ought to admire his wisdom, power, and love. On the seventh day, God rested from his work; and from the beginning it has been his command, that men should keep holy the seventh day; that therein they may contemplate his works of creation, his providence, and grace.



Blest with the joys of innocence
Adam our father stood;
Till he debased his soul to sense
And ate th' unlawful food.

THE FALL

BEFORE CHRIST 4004 YEARS.

Adam, by one transgression, lost
His gracious God and garden too,
Disease and death with all their woes,
Were thus entail'd on me and you.

THE Almighty creator was graciously pleased to place Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, which was well stored with every tree, not only pleasant to the eye, but good for food also. Here they were indulged with communion with their God, who prohibited them no enjoyment except that of eating of the fruit of one tree in the midst of the garden; and this was to prove their obedience to their Maker's commands. In this garden their condition was truly happy, but alas! it did not long remain so; for Satan, who was once a

bright angel of light, but fell from heaven for his rebellion against God, envying the happiness of man, and ardently desiring to destroy that happiness, and ruin the noblest work of God's creation, in the form of a serpent, a subtle animal, finding Eve alone, artfully tempted her to eat of the forbidden fruit, assuring her that the threat of God would not be executed, and that she would increase her happiness by tasting thereof,—which she too readily believed, and, having eaten herself, gave also to Adam, who partook thereof with her: and now they found to their misery and shame that the devil had deceived them. When God came into the garden as usual, they were afraid of his presence, and attempted to hide themselves from him, which was quite in vain, for not any place can hide us from his all-

seeing eye; from their retreat they were compelled to come forth, and stood condemned before their judge for the offence. Adam charged the sin upon his wife, and she upon the serpent; but God knew their whole conduct,—they could not deceive him, and he might justly have condemned them to eternal woe; but he extended his mercy towards them, and graciously gave the first promise that stands recorded in the Bible,—that the Saviour Jesus Christ should come into the world and bruise the serpent's head, (for the devil is called the old serpent, Rev. xii. 9.) and this he did at the appointed time. Thus we learn how sin entered into the world, which is the cause of all our misery; and here we learn the compassion of God in providing for the salvation of sinners; let us therefore pray for grace to hate sin,

and love Christ, who died to put it away, and save us from endless ruin.

Adam lived to see the earth overspread with wickedness in consequence of his fall, and the world was filled with misery and confusion; and, according to the divine threatening, the dissolution of his body took place, and it was committed to the dust from which it was taken. He lived 930 years, and it is believed that he was buried on the spot, Mount Calvary, where our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified, Let us lift up our prayers that while we are contemplating "*the first man,*" who was "*of the earth, earthly.*" we may be instructed in the knowledge of the "*second Man, who is the Lord from heaven.*"

How Satan tempts one mother's son,
To rage against another:
Thus wicked Cain was hurried on
Till he had kill'd his brother.

CAIN AND ABEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 3875 YEARS.

By envious Cain should we be taught,
How crimes like murder may begin:
And how one angry jealous thought,
May lead the soul to greater sin.

ADAM and Eve, our first parents, in consequence of the disobedience to the command of God in eating of the forbidden fruit, were expelled the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword was placed at the gate thereof, to prevent their ever returning again: and they were compelled to have recourse to labour to gain their daily bread, for God in the curse had declared, that by the sweat of his brow man should henceforth live, having forfeited all title to ease by sin; and the posterity of Adam have ever since been obliged to live by labour and toil. After our first parents

were driven out of Paradise, they had two sons born,—Cain and Abel; the former was a husbandman, and tilled the ground; the latter was a shepherd, and attended his flocks; thus from the beginning God designed that man should have employment; idleness is ever to be avoided,—it is injurious to our bodies, and especially to our souls, for Satan is always finding employment for the idle; therefore let us study to be diligent. Cain, the first man born into the world, was a wicked man, but Abel was righteous: they both brought offerings to God of the produce of their different employments; Cain brought of the fruit of the field, and Abel brought of the best of his flocks, in which he had an eye to the sacrifice of the promised Saviour; but God, who sees the heart, knew that Cain did not bring his offering from right

motives, therefore he rejected it: but he accepted what Abel brought, because his heart was right; he sought God's glory and favour in what he did, and this was pleasing in his Maker's sight, From this may be learned the importance of serving God in sincerity. Cain perceiving that God rejected his offering, and accepted that of his brother, hated him in his heart and determined to kill him. O what a depraved heart must that be which can hate holiness, and how wicked must he be that can hate his brother as Cain did, and not be satisfied but by murdering him, which dreadful deed he did while walking together in the field! but it was not long before Cain was called to an account for this horrid deed. The all seeing God, "*from whom no secrets can be hid,*" appeared before him, and demanded the

reason of his brother's absence. Sensible of the enormity of his crime, Cain attempted to reply, by pretending to be surprised at not having seen his brother for some time; and observed, that he was neither the guardian of Abel, nor empowered to watch his actions. On this the Almighty charged Cain, in direct terms, with the murder of his brother, and for which he was banished by God from his fellow-creatures as a vagabond.

From this story observe the importance of watching against envy, hatred, and malice; for if hatred is once indulged in the mind, it may, without grace preventing it, end at length in the horrid crime of murder.

As Enoch offer'd humble praise,
He glorified the Lord;
And those who tread his holy ways,
Shall have a rich reward.

TRANSLATION OF ENOCH.

BEFORE CHRIST 3017 YEARS.

Like Enoch may I walk with God,
And shun the paths of sin and death
So shall I reach that blest abode,
Where all is joy, and peace, and rest.

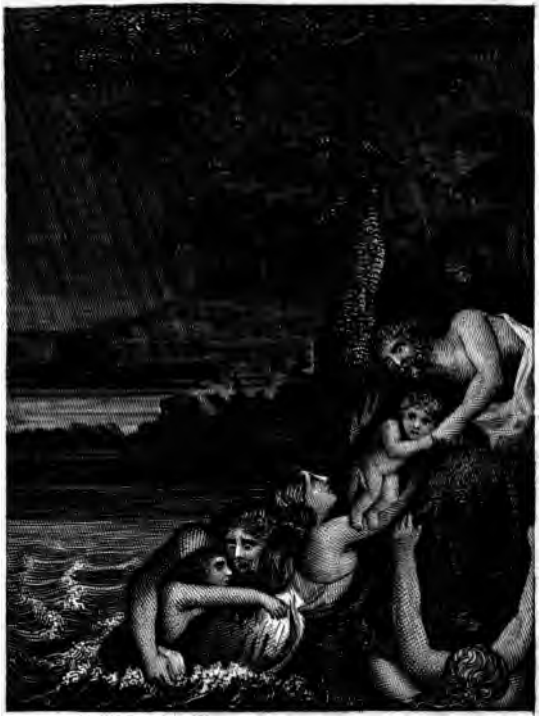
IN this part of Scripture history, we are presented with many names of the immediate posterity of Adam, but not any one demands our attention more, if so much, as Enoch, for he walked with God, and was blessed and beloved by his Maker. It is true he lived on earth but 365 years, while Methuselah attained to near 1000 years of age; but length of days is no proof of being a favourite of heaven, for many an aged man is an awful sinner before God; therefore let the young be concerned to know and serve their Creator in the days of their youth, for he is indeed worthy of

their best love and attention. Enoch had the testimony that he pleased God, and of all the blessings under heaven, his approbation is first to be desired. The only way to be happy is to walk with him, and the closer our walk is, the more happy we may hope to be. As a proof that God was pleased with Enoch, he spared him the trial and pain of dying; for ever since the fall, death has been more or less a dreaded evil,—such is the effect of sin; but God took Enoch to heaven without letting him see death, or enter the grave. This was a peculiar case, and while it bespeaks his almighty power, it is not intended to lead us to expect such an end; we must die, and the certainty of so solemn event should stir us up to be prepared; and the only way to be prepared, and to meet death without fear, is to walk with God as Enoch

did, who herein is our example; and we have much reason to be thankful that the word of God abounds with examples for our imitation, as well as with dreadful punishments of sin for our warning. When we compare the great age to which men lived in this early period of the world, to the present length of life, we perceive that our time is much shortened; this we may praise God for; three-score years and ten are enough in this world of sin and sorrow, and they who are prepared by God's grace for a better world, need not desire to live here longer than they may be useful and it may please God to call them.

Enoch was eminent in religion. He was entirely dead to this world, and did not only walk after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God, as if he were in heaven already; he lived above the rate,

not only of other men, but of other saints; not only good in bad times, but best in good times. He was also active in promoting religion among others. Enoch, it should seem, was a priest of the Most High God, and as Noah, who is likewise said to have walked with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming, saying, "*Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,*" Jude 14. May we be concerned, that when our Lord shall thus appear to judge the world, we may not be found among the wicked, but clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and exalted to walk with God and the Lamb, among saints and angels in Paradise above for ever and ever.



Aloud they cry, the hour is past:
Louder the billows roar:
Struggling with Death they breath their last:
And sink to rise no more.

THE DELUGE.

BEFORE CHRIST 2349 YEARS.

Whatever breath'd, is lost; in ocean's caves
Their bodies whelm'd, or floating on the waves:
Noah the universal wreck survives,
By the great pilot steer'd, his feeble vessel lives.

MANKIND had now become so wicked upon the earth that it repented the merciful God that he had made man, but yet so great was his compassion, that though he threatened him with destruction for sin, yet he gave him time for repentance, and withheld his anger till his patience was exhausted; he therefore resolved to destroy all flesh by the waters of a flood. But in this time of general depravity there was one family that served God in uprightness, even Noah and his house; to this family the Lord designed mercy, and therefore commanded him to prepare an ark, like

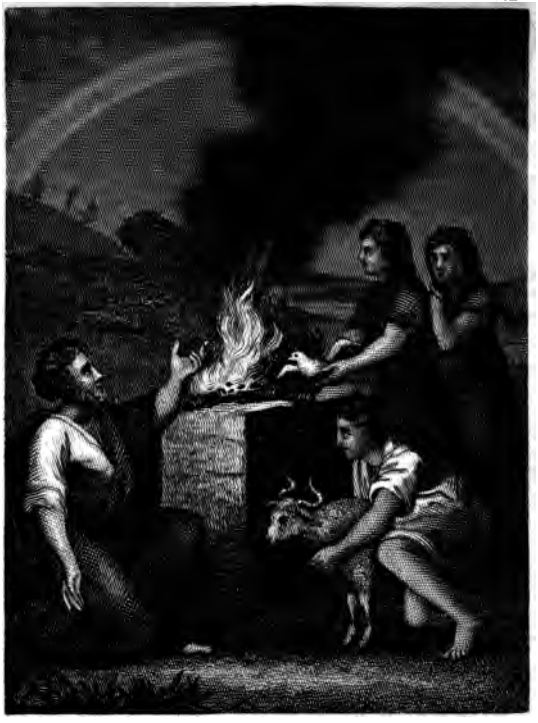
the hulk of a ship, to float upon the waters, of such a size as to contain seven of every clean, and two of every unclean beast and fowl, the pairs to keep all flesh alive, and the seventh to offer for sacrifice when Noah should leave the ark. Noah, therefore, as God commanded him, built an ark, and with his wife, three sons and their wives, eight souls in all, entered this abode; and while God for sin swept away all flesh from the earth, here they dwelt with safety till the dreadful judgment was past.

The whole face of nature now began to wear a gloomy aspect, and to appear as if the earth was to be finally dissolved; the windows of heaven were opened, and the earth was overspread with a dreadful inundation. In vain did sinful mortals seek for protection from the common destruction; for mountains and valleys were soon alike,

and every refuge was banished from their sight, Forty days and nights did the rain continue to fall without intermission; when at length the ark began to float, and was elevated above the highest mountains. A dismal scene now presented itself! The earth, with all its beautiful variety of nature and art, was no more! Nothing appeared to the sight but a watery desert, abounding with wrecks of the once lovely creation.

From this awful narrative we may learn how God abhors sin; for we may rest assured that after having pronounced every thing very good at the creation, he would not have destroyed the work of his hands if iniquity had not been exceedingly hateful in his sight, Thus God once destroyed the world by water; and his word informs us that he will again destroy it by fire: (2 Peter iii. 7.) And as there was no place

of safety then but the ark, neither will there be any hiding-place in the great conflagration but Christ, of whom the ark may be considered a striking type; but as sure as Noah and his family were safe in the ark, during the whole of the deluge, so sure will all who are found in Christ, the living ark, be safe, not only when the world is in flames, but at the last great judgment-day: much therefore does it concern us to seek a refuge in the Saviour, that we may be safe for time and eternity.



Behold the gay bow in the Sky!
How vivid the colors are seen,
Its glories extended on high:
With orange, and purple, and green.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.

BEFORE CHRIST 2348 YEARS.

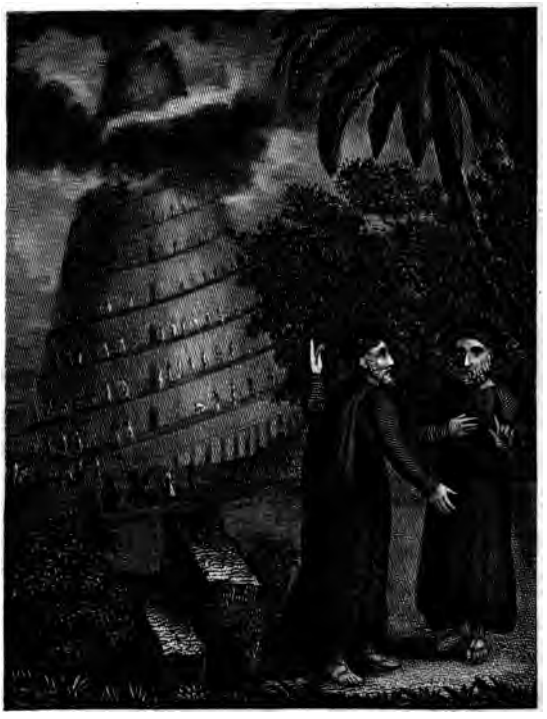
Noah does of living turf an alter raise,
And to their kind Preserver kneels and prays:
Two of the fairest birds and beasts he gave
To Him who them, and all the rest did save.

GOD having threatened to bring the flood, he fulfilled his word, for he is ever true in what he says, both in judgment and mercy: he opened the windows of heaven, and broke up the great deep, and destroyed man and beast from the earth. All this while Noah and his family were floating safely in the ark on the universal flood; but, after many days, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, in Asia. From this place Noah sent forth a raven and a dove, to see if the waters were abated from the earth, the former lived upon the carcases it found, and rested on

the ark; but the latter, not finding a place for her foot, returned into the ark again. After a few days, Noah sent forth the dove again, which returned with an olive branch; and, after seven days more, being sent forth again, she returned no more, which was to him a sign that the earth was dry; but the Patriarch would not leave his abode till God bid him; the Lord had ordered him into the ark, and he would not remove till the same gracious Being ordered him to leave it; and thus should we be always anxious to have all our goings ordered by the goodness of Providence. This highly favoured family, after having been confined for more than twelve months in the ark, entered again upon the wide world, and solemn, indeed, must have been the scene of one general desolation. Having seen all the brute cre-

ation leave the ark, Noah offered the seventh clean beast and bird to God for a sacrifice (in reference to Christ, who, in the fulness of time, was to turn away God's wrath from man, by the sacrifice of himself), at which the Lord was pleased, and declared that he would no more destroy the world by a flood, and he set his bow in the cloud as a seal to the covenant he thus condescended to make; when, therefore, the rain falls and we discern the beautiful rainbow, we may be comforted, for it is a proof of the faithfulness of God, that he is mindful of his covenant; and it is observable that the darker the sky is, the brighter the bow appears; so the heavier our trials and the darker our prospects are, the brighter the promises of God's covenant of grace shine to the eye of faith.

God, by his divine promise, having eased the mind of Noah, who was fearful of a second deluge, and after blessing him and his sons, granted them many privileges, such as far exceeded those he had bestowed on our primitive parents. Before the flood, mankind had no other food than vegetables, but now the Almighty, after giving Noah and his sons the same dominion over the creation as he had done Adam, permitted them to use any creatures they thought proper for food, only with this restriction, that they should not eat the blood thereof. This restraint was intended by God, to prevent the shedding of human blood, against which he denounces the following sentence, "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*" Gen. ix. 6.



And now succeeds a fact most strange,
For all the tribes their language change,
Touch'd by that God who swift as thought,
To each an unknown diction taught.

CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

BEFORE CHRIST 2247 YEARS.

In vain they built; behold the Almighty smiles
At their attempts, and blast their impious piles!
Confus'd their dialect, they all disperse
In various tribes around the universe.

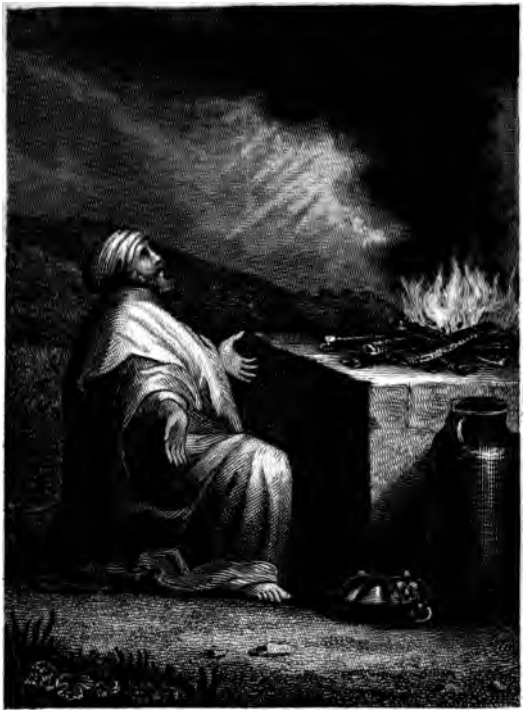
MANKIND had greatly increased again in about one hundred years after the flood, and they all dwelt together, and only one language prevailed; it would have been wisdom in them to have separated and removed into different parts of the earth, and to have replenished it as God commanded Noah, (chap ix. 1.) but they chose rather to keep together in opposition to God, and determined on building a city, and a tower, whose top should reach to heaven, under the idea of securing themselves against another flood; whereas, they ought to have trusted in the promise

of God, that he would no more destroy the earth by water; thus their design was an offence to God, they forgot their situation as creatures of a day, and they presumptuously resolved to reach to heaven by the labour of their own hands, thereby intending to procure to themselves a great name among posterity, and to prevent their being dispersed through the earth. But how did they succeed? After God had suffered them to proceed a considerable way with their project, he laughed them to scorn; and, by causing an alteration in their language, he rendered their design abortive; for, not being able to understand one another's words, they were constrained to desist from their work; leaving a lesson to all ages how futile all human attempts must prove against the will of God, and how impossible it is for man to succeed in

any enterprise which has not the approbation of heaven. The Almighty suffered them to proceed, and he often allows bad men to go a great way in wickedness, but he has wise ends to answer; for, by blighting their purposes in his own time, he displays not only his power, but exhibits the folly of those who go on obstinately in sin, that men may, from such examples, learn to fear God, and keep his commandments. These Babel-builders thought, by their plan, to keep together, but they took the very means to defeat their designs, and to answer God's own purpose; for, when he confused their language, they were obliged to separate, and thus the earth was peopled. Whatever God purposes will certainly be accomplished, for he can make both the wrath and folly of man to turn to his glory, and against him

no human wisdom or council shall ever prevail.

Some of the Jewish doctors say, that God either overturned the tower by a terrible tempest, or else destroyed it by fire from heaven. Be this, however, as it may, there is not the least doubt but it long remained a monument of human vanity, and of the omnipotence of that Being, who called the universe out of nothing. God is able to bring to nought all the devices and designs of foolish men. He sits in heaven and laughs at the counsels of the kings of the earth against him and his anointed, and will force them to confess that there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord. Let us follow the advice of Solomon, "*In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct thy path.*"—Prov. iii. 6.



As Abra'am by divine command,
Left his own house to walk with God:
His faith beheld the promis'd land,
And fir'd his zeal along the road.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

BEFORE CHRIST 1921 YEARS.

"Rich is the land to which I call;
My blessing there shall on thee fall,
My constant guide, my arm defend,
And I will be thy constant friend."

HERE is introduced to our particular attention one of the greatest and most highly-favoured characters in the sacred volume. God calls Abraham, in Isaiah xli. 8, his friend; and St. Paul, in Galatains iii. 9, entitles him, "*Faithful Abraham,*" yet he was originally an idolater in the land of Chaldea; but the Lord having mercy in store for him, was pleased, when he was seventy-five years of age, not only to bring him from his native land into Canaan, but also from his blind and ignorant condition into a saving knowledge of the true God. It was the Lord that

ordered Abraham to leave his kindred and people, and he obeyed; and whatever God has commanded it is our duty, and in the end it will prove our happiness, to attend to, for none were ever losers by obedience. This is proved by the experience of Abraham, he attended to the divine command, and was led from blessing to blessing; but the greatest favour of all that the Almighty bestowed upon him was in making him the ancestor of Christ, for it was promised him that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed; this had special reference to the Saviour of the world, in whom alone mankind can be blessed: and our Lord has told us that Abraham had the eye of faith to look forward to the Redeemer, and rejoiced to see his day. (John viii. 56.) It is to be noticed that Abraham built an altar to the Lord immediately

on his arrival in Canaan; and it should ever be considered our duty, that wherever we go, to practice love and religion, and in all situations through life, never to forget to praise the Lord for his mercies, and to seek constant guidance and direction at his hands. But Abraham found an alloy in Canaan; there was a famine in the land; and thus it is with all at times, there are many difficulties in this world, but in heaven there will be an uninterrupted and eternal peace and joy to the righteous. May it be our lot to be called out of darkness into marvellous light, and be brought to the light of heaven at length and that better Canaan above.

By God's calling Abraham to leave his country, he was tried whether he loved God better than he loved his native land and dearest friends, and whether he could

willingly leave all to walk with God. His country had become idolatrous, his kindred and his father's house were a constant temptation to him, and he could not continue with them without danger of being infected; therefore he was called to come out from among them. Natural affection must give way to divine grace. Sin, and all the occasions of it, must be forsaken, and particularly bad company: those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must avoid the society of evil-doers, and if we obey his commands God will not fail to bless us.

Now view the Country round and seize
The plains that best thine eye may please:
And let us part. With care around
The son of Haran view'd the ground.

ABRAHAM AND LOT SEPARATE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1917 YEARS.

Lot now removes to where fair Jordan falls,
And graz'd his flocks by Sodom's impious walls;
Too near ill neighbours, whom a vengeance waits
Worthy their crimes, almost he shar'd their fates.

LOT was the son of Haran, the brother of Abraham, and having lost his father, was taken in early life under the care of his uncle, whom he accompanied out of Chaldea, and was his companion from place to place in all his journeys; at length their possessions of cattle became so great that the land would not contain their substance, which gave rise to a dispute between their different herdsmen, to the grief of Abraham, whose meek and disinterested spirit could not bear that any difference should arise between them; and though he was the elder and superior, he was the first to make some arrangement

for their future peace to accomplish that object, he proposed to Lot that they should separate, and that Lot should take his choice as to where his future settlement should be; thus setting us an example to promote peace by all means, and not to consider any earthly sacrifice too dear to purchase that blessing. Lot embraced the offer made by Abraham, and observing the plain of Jordan to be well watered and just suited for his flocks, he chose that spot, attending only to his temporal advantage, without considering on that spot stood the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the inhabitants of which were dreadful sinners before God. Lot's conduct in this affair ought to teach us the danger and folly of choosing for ourselves. We are indeed too apt to be guided by the eye of sense, and only to study our worldly advantage;

and by so doing we often plunge ourselves into difficulties and temptations; whereas, we should never consider any thing as being really good for us that is not beneficial to our souls.

It was no doubt a trial to Abraham to be separated from his relative Lot, but his loss was soon supplied by fresh communications of grace and comfort; he found an all-sufficient friend in God; in His infinite mercy he appeared again to him, and repeated his promise that all the land of Canaan should be given to him, and to his descendants, and that his seed should be as numerous as the dust of the earth. The promised land was bounded on the north by Babylon, or the land of Chaldea, on the east by Arabia the Desert, called in Scripture the Wilderness; on the south by Egypt, and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

To improve this part of scripture history, we should pay attention to the generous manner in which Abraham expressed himself to Lot "*Let there be no strife between us,*" he says; and why? "*Because we are brethren;*" a forcible argument surely, for if it were allowable for any to quarrel, surely brethren should love one another; children of the same parents, relations of one house, ought to agree and seek each other's happiness; and "*O how pleasant a thing it is when brethren dwell together in unity,*" as the royal psalmist expresses it. Further improvement of this subject is, not to set too high a value upon worldly possessions. Abraham and Lot lived in peace till riches increased; they are too apt to fill the mind with pride and to create disquietude; let us therefore rather seek to increase in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, which alone can "*make us wise unto salvation.*"

Melchisedek now having heard;
To meet the victor train appeard:
Gives bread and wine proceeds to bless,
And praises God for their success.

ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEC.

BEFORE CHRIST 1913 YEARS.

The great Melchizedec, of race unknown,
Who wore a mitre, tho' he fill'd a throne,
To Heaven's ally did refreshments bring
Himself a wondrous prophet, priest, and king.

LOT had not long resided in the plain of Jericho before he experienced the sad effects of separating from Abraham; for the kings of the countries around about having revolted against the king of Elam, whom they had served, the king of Elam, joined by the other confederate princes, invaded the cities of the plain, and having subdued the rebels, these cities were given up to plunder, and Lot and his goods were taken away by the invaders. Lot by parting from his uncle may be considered as having got out of the path of duty, at least he had done wrong in settling at such a wicked place, and had exposed himself

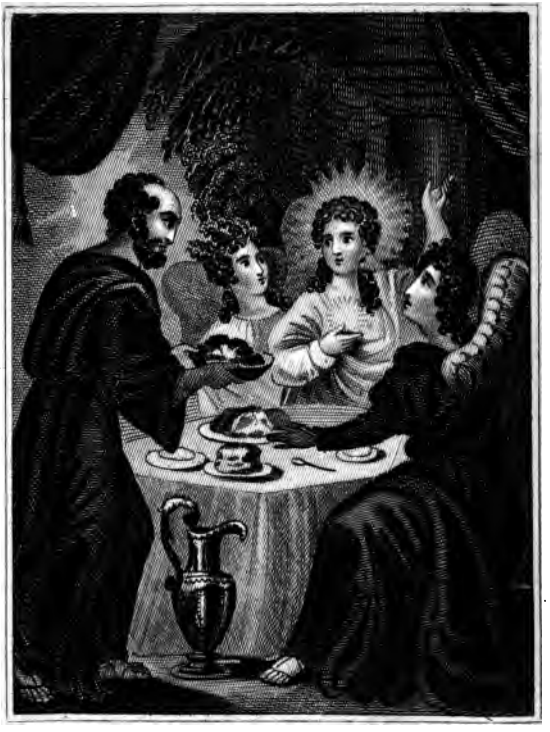
to great trouble and misery. This unadvised conduct of Lot should be a warning to us to beware how to forsake the company of the righteous and our best friends; and it also teaches us how uncertain all the possessions of this life are, and how constantly in danger we are of being deprived of them. An account of the trouble that Lot had fallen into soon became known to Abraham, when he immediately armed his servants and pursued the conquerors by night, and by the blessing of Providence he smote them, and rescued Lot and his pr perty out of their hands. This evinced what a generous spirit Abraham possessed, for he might have left Lot to his fate in retaliation for leaving him; but he was not wanting in concern for the welfare of his nephew, though he had been deficient in duty towards him; but the faults of others

will not justify unkindness in us. We also see the necessity of acting at all times in an obliging manner to all with whom we have to do, for there are times when we all require the kind aid and assistance of our friends. In this expedition the victorious Abraham had taken much spoil, but he declined to appropriate the smallest portion of it to his own use. In this we have a proof of his belief in the promise which God had made to him, that the land of Canaan should, in time, be given to him, and to his seed; he therefore desired not the riches of the kings whom he had conquered, believing that all the riches of the land would in time be given to his descendants.

In Abraham we have an instance of the greatness and power, in their days, of those men whom we call patriarchs, for we find

that he had three hundred and eighteen servants, all born and brought up in his own house. The place called Damascus, in this account, was afterwards the capital of Syria, It is now one of the finest cities in that part of the world.

On Abraham's return from this successful enterprise he met Melchizedec, king of Salem, who is called the priest of the most high God, and who refreshed Abraham with bread and wine, and blessed him in the name of the Lord. There are various opinions who this great personage was that met Abraham, and some consider him to have been no other than Jesus Christ in human form; if so, it proves how highly favoured the patriarch was—but if he was only a man, he has given us an example to be kind and hospitable as we are favoured with opportunity.



The God of purity and love,
From his celestial throne above
Sends three to Sodom; on their way
They Abraham a visit pay.

ABRAHAM VISITED BY ANGELS.

BEFORE CHRIST 1898 YEARS.

Three glorious guests to Abraham appear'd,
In human form; the patriarch kneel'd and fear'd:
If mortal, asks a mortal's board they'd share?
Or if divine, his sacrifice and prayer!

GOD Almighty had more than once promised Abraham that he should be the Father of many nations, and that from him should spring the promised seed, or Christ; but year after year he was kept waiting as a trial to his faith, and there appeared no prospect of his being blessed with an heir; indeed obstacles to such an event might be considered as increasing, owing to Abraham and Sarah's advancing age; but what God has promised shall surely come to pass; and if we are found in the way of duty, we may rest satisfied of the fulfilment of *his good pleasure* towards us. In the

eighteenth chapter of Genesis, we find Abraham favoured with a visit by three angels as he sat at the tent-door in the heat of the day, and on this occasion he spared no pains to entertain the gracious guests in the best manner in his power. He hastened to present them with water to wash and food to refresh them, and although he believed them to be but men, he did not think it beneath him to stand beside them, and administer to their wants. It was the custom in those countries to regale under tall oaks; and it was considered no disgrace for a prince even to go and fetch a lamb from the flock, while the princess his consort prepared the fire to dress it. These heavenly messengers brought the pleasing intelligence to Abraham, that the time when the Lord would make good his repeated promise of a gift of a son was

now fast approaching: this news no doubt was highly pleasing to the aged Patriarch; but to Sarah the tidings appeared too good to be true, she therefore indulged in a laugh of distrust, which drew from one of the heavenly visitors a reproof, *"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"* It is to be feared that we are too prone to set up human improbability in contradiction to the promises of God, and because our finite reason cannot comprehend His ways, to call in question the possibility of their fulfilment; whereas could we rightly consider that it is the Almighty who has spoken, we then should feel more disposed to rest satisfied that he will in his good time accomplish what he has engaged to do. Sarah, overcome with fear denied that she laughed; but she dissembled in vain, God could not be deceived. It *would be well* for us to remember that

God is acquainted with all our thoughts, sees all our actions, and is ever about our path; and that he hates lying; this should lead us to pray for a love of truth and sincerity.

The sacred historian, with the most impartial veracity, conceals no faults, even of God's most favoured servants, in order that we may be convinced that the best of people are not free from sin; for the same corruptions of nature existed in former times as at the present, and so will do till all human things are at an end. Sarah had heard of many of the promises of God, and she had seen that Abraham believed in them, but still she doubted, although the promises were those of the Almighty. Let us pray that we fall not into the sin of unbelief; and often exclaim, "*Lord help thou mine unbelief.*"

Lot's Wife proceeds close at their heels,
But in her heart reluctance feels.
Yea Lot himself did ling'ring stand,
But mercy pluck'd him by the hand.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

BEFORE CHRIST 1898 YEARS.

Wide spreads the flames, the tempest gains
And furious drives across the plains:
Sodom, Gomorrah, Adnah, join
In fate, with raging fire they shine.

THE angels who brought Abraham the glad tidings that his much wished-for heir, Isaac, should be born, brought him also the intelligence of the distruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, for the wickedness that was therein. This excited Abraham's pity so much, that he poured forth to God one of the most fervent and affecting prayers that we find in the Bible; he entreated, if there were fifty righteous persons, that God would spare the wicked for their sakes; and the Almighty so encouraged his petition, that at length could only ten righteous souls have been found, the cities of the

plain would have been spared for their sakes. Doubtless the Patriarch hated the sins of Sodom, but he pitied the sinners, and has set us a striking example earnestly to pray for such. Here also we may see of what value the righteous are in God's esteem; for their sake the world stands, and for their sake mercy is often showed to the wicked, proving the folly as well as the wickedness of hating the righteous. The two created angels who had been with Abraham (for the third is supposed to have been God in the form of an angel) went on to Sodom, and found entertainment in Lot's house, but they soon discovered that there the most dreadful wickedness abounded, and which called loud for the vengeance of an offended God; therefore that very night it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed all the inhabitants,

except Lot and his family; and even Lot lingered in the city, but the Lord had mercy upon him and brought him out. His righteous soul had been vexed from day to day by these ungodly people, and but for divine compassion he might have perished in the overthrow: thus while we know that the Lord can deliver the godly out of temptation, yet we see how the people of God expose themselves to share in the troubles of the wicked, if from choice they abide amongst them. While Lot and his family were flying from the dreadful fire his wife (contrary to express command,) looked behind her, for her heart was set upon the things she had left behind, and she became a pillar of salt. Our blessed Saviour has graciously bid us "*remember Lot's wife,*" (Luke xvii. 32.) warning us hereby to beware of going back to the world

and sin, after having set out on the way towards heaven.

Let us never reflect on the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah without attending to the following things: 1st. That idleness and the abuse of God's benefit, led the people of Sodom to the commission of unnatural crimes; from which let us endeavour to keep a proper restraint over our passions, lest we fall into temptation. 2dly. The dreadful judgment of God upon Sodom is a proof of the judgment and condemnation reserved for the wicked at the last day. The people burned with unnatural lust, and God rained fire and brimstone upon them. 3dly. We find that Lot's sons perished in the flames because they despised the warnings given them; from this we may learn how dreadful it is to reject any of the *promises or threat*enings of Almighty God.

When faithful Abraham raisd the knife
God saw and said, "Forbear,
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life,
Behold the victim there".

ABRAHAM OFFERING ISAAC.

BEFORE CHRIST 1872 YEARS.

——from heaven a voice like thunder broke,
And to the patriarch thus the Almighty spoke.—
"Enough, my friends! enough, thy piety is shown;
Thy matchless faith shall be to after ages known."

AGREEABLY to the word spoken by the angels in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, at the time appointed Isaac was born; for no promise of the Lord shall fail; though it may be long delayed, yet it shall be fulfilled in his good time.

Abraham might now have considered himself in possession of all he needed to make him happy on this side of heaven, and that having lived to see God's promises accomplished, he should pass the remainder of his days in peace; but there is no settled rest on earth: this is a chequered life at best, and the greatest of Abraham's trials was *yet to* come; Isaac, "the child

of promise," had attained to the age of manhood when his aged father was called upon to offer him up as a sacrifice on a mountain three days' journey from where he dwelt. The mountain to which Abraham was directed to proceed is supposed to have been the highest in the land of Moriah, and hence it appears that the spot on which Isaac was offered up a willing victim, is no other than Mount Calvary, on which our Saviour suffered the death of the cross about 2,000 years afterwards. So great was Abraham's faith, and so high did his love to God and obedience to his word rise above all other considerations, that he never disputed the command, severe as it was, but speedily prepared to surrender his only hope without a murmur. On the third day he took his beloved Isaac to *the place appointed,* and having bound him,

put the wood in order upon the altar, and was just going to slay him; when on a sudden an angel called from heaven and bid him stay his hand, for the Lord had accepted his willingness, and was satisfied. It was in the moment of extremity that the angel spoke to Abraham, and thus God is often pleased to choose the time of our greatest dangers and difficulties to display his love and mercy; he is not indifferent to the trials and sorrows of his people; he observes what they pass through, and in the time of need is a present help; let us therefore "*cast all our care upon him, for he careth for us.*" 1 Peter v. 7. The approbation that God shewed to Abraham's conduct should teach us to part with what he demands at our hands willingly, for he is not unmindful of our obedience. When Abraham had desisted, as the angel had

directed him, he discovered a ram caught in a thicket, which he offered up instead of Isaac. The commands of God, are never obeyed in vain; for on this occasion he repeated his promise that the seed of Abraham should be as numerous as the sands upon the sea-shore.—The mercies of God bestowed upon Abraham were in proportion to his obedience, and rose with every new demonstration of his faith. Nor was this testimony given merely for his own sake, but for the instruction and encouragement of all true believers to the end of the world, and for the comfort and joy of all religious and holy persons. Abraham offered up his son at the Almighty's command, and, O how willingly did God give his only begotten Son for sinners! Isaac did not die a sacrifice, but Christ did; and truly he merits our love and adoration, or had he not died for us, we could not have been saved from eternal death.

Give me to drink fair maid he cries,
The beauteous damsel thus replies,
"Drink first my lord and quickly I
Thy train of Camels will supply.

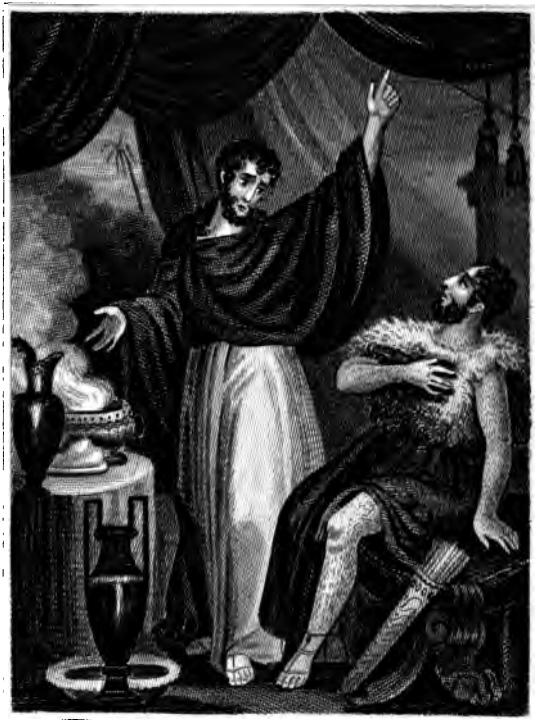
A WIFE FOR ISAAC SOUGHT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1857 YEARS.

Isaac they meet at evening tide,
Who, smiling, views his future bride.
The whole success the servant tells;
The master's heart with rapture swells.

ABRAHAM was called to experience another trial, soon after he had offered up his son, and that was the death of his beloved wife Sarah. For many years they had trod the vale of life together, but the dearest ties must at last be broken, the nearest and dearest relations must part; such is the curse that sin has brought into the world. When Sarah was dead, Abraham purchased a burial-place for her, in which he himself was afterwards laid, and also many related to him. Sarah lived to be 127 years of age, but how many are called hence in the days of youth, which

he met with Rebekah, Isaac's cousin. His conduct, by the way, is a striking example to servants; he was deeply concerned about the errand that he went on, and made it a matter of prayer; God in answer sent him prosperity, and Rebekah was willing to return with him, and become Isaac's wife. When the servants perceived that he had succeeded in this important mission, he blessed God, and returned home, and was met on his way by Isaac, who thus had an opportunity of introducing to his affectionate father, a wife worthy to become a member of his honoured and highly-favoured house. Here we have an example to begin every thing in prayer, and then we may hope it will end in praise; for if we acknowledge God in all our ways, "*he shall direct our paths.*" Proverbs iii. 6.



Poor Esau repented too late,
That once he his birth right despis'd,
And sold for a morsel of meat
What could not too highly be prized

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1805 YEARS.

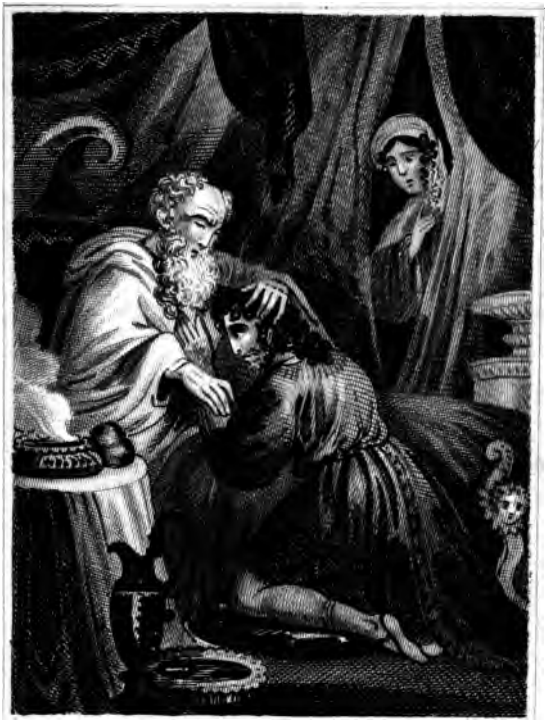
Weary and faint, returning from the chase
To meet his father's blessing and embrace,
Now Esau comes and begs he'd deign to share
Th' effects of his good fortune and his care.

IT pleased God to promise that he would multiply Abraham's seed as the stars of heaven, and yet he had but one son that was interested in the promise. Isaac did not marry till he was 40 years of age, and had no children till he was 60; all this might have been considered very discouraging to the patriarchs, who were much concerned for the building up of their families, but they were compelled to wait the Lord's time, "*who is righteous in all his ways.*" After Isaac and Rebekah had waited twenty years, the Lord blessed them with twins, and the gift of these children was in answer

to prayer: thus we are encouraged to make known all our requests to God, and are not prohibited the liberty of carrying our sorrows, whether spiritual or temporal, to the throne of grace. Though Esau and Jacob were twins, yet Providence so ordered it, that Esau should be the first born, and as entitled to the birthright, which was both a spiritual and natural privilege, highly prized by all good men, having the blessing of increase, and the promise of that seed in whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed. By this privilege Esau set but little store, for one day when returning from hunting, oppressed with fatigue and hunger, he willingly parted with his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage. It may be thought it was natural for him to part with all he had for food, but there can be no doubt *he might* easily have obtained a supply of

other refreshment; it rather seems that he was set upon having some of his brother's pottage, while he attached but little value to his birthright, and therefore he would sooner part with that than be disappointed. In his conduct in selling his birthright, we have a striking instance of the small regard he had for Christ, the promised seed.—There are too many like Esau now in the world, who prefer sensual enjoyment to the great benefits purchased by Christ, and take more pleasure in gratifying their passions, than in the happiness of a religious life. O beware of setting the mind so strongly upon any object for which you would be willing to part with all that is dear and valuable; and especially beware how you part with the favour of God, for any earthly honour, riches or pleasures; awful indeed will be their *condition* at last, who have exchanged

their eternal benefit for the trifles of this life. In the same chapter (Gen. xxv.) which records the impious contempt of Esau for his birthright, we meet with the peaceful end of good old Abraham, who, although he had his two sons to bury him, lived and died a stranger on earth; from whence let us learn that if we are the real servants of God, we shall be no other than pilgrims and strangers while here below. Abraham, it is said, was *"gathered to his people;"* there is something very striking in this expression—when the pious die they are gathered to their own, to such as were their associates on earth. O then make the righteous your friends, and in heaven they will be your companions for ever and ever.



Isaac enquires 'art thou my son
My Esau?' thus his question run.
Jacob replies I am! The Sire
Imparts the blessing, his desire.

ACOB OBTAINS THE BLESSING.

BEFORE CHRIST 1760 YEARS.

Trembling the patriarch, when his voice he knew;
"If thou my son, my Esau, where and who,
Where is the impostor did thy blessing steal?
Nor can I that reverse which Heaven did seal."

ISAAC being now far advanced on the journey of life, and feeling those infirmities of age which reminded him that he could not expect any longer continuance here, called for his eldest son, to give him the blessing, which, as first-born, he considered was his due; but, alas! Esau had sold this privilege to Jacob, and thereby had placed himself in the situation that God had foretold in Gen. xxv. 23, when he said, "*the elder shall serve the younger.*" Isaac desired Esau to go and hunt in the field and bring him venison, that he might eat, and bless him before he died. Rebekah overheard these directions, and knowing that Jacob

was to inherit the blessing, she put him upon an expedient the most dishonourable, and which under no circumstance, is to be brought forward as an example: she directed him to go to the flock and fetch two kids, which she dressed, and having put the skin of the kids upon Jacob's neck and hands, to make him feel like Esau, who was a hairy man, she sent him to his father with the savoury meat, and he succeeded in obtaining the blessing; but if his aged father had not been blind he would not have been able to have practised the deception upon him—for the good old man suspected there was something wrong in the business, and therefore questioned him very closely: "*Art thou my very son Esau?*" "*How camest thou so quickly by the venison?*" To these close questions Jacob returned very ready answers; which reflec-

ted no credit upon him; for while there is not a more pleasing trait in human character than truth, there is not a more despicable one than lying. He was permitted to deceive his father and to obtain the blessing in an indirect manner; yet it will never justify a bad action that it was done for a good end, for we are not to do evil that good may come. The surprise of the good old patriarch was very great, when some time afterwards, his son Esau returned from the chase with the venison he had been in pursuit of, brought it to his father, and claimed the promised blessing. He trembled exceedingly lest he should have bestowed his blessing upon an improper object, for there was no doubt in his mind as to the efficacy of it, God having told him that whomsoever he blessed should be blessed, and that what he did on earth

should be ratified in heaven.—Esau, however, begged hard for some portion of his father's blessing, and he therefore blessed him, but prophesied that he should serve his brother. Esau determined to revenge himself on his brother when the days of mourning for Isaac had expired; but his intentions became known to Rebekah, and she therefore procured the removal of Jacob to the land of her kindred, until Esau's hate should subside. Had she left the accomplishing of God's purpose to his own hands, he would have made Jacob's title clear; but blind unbelief is prone to take God's work out of his hands, presuming to know and do better than the Lord himself, "*who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.*" (Isaiah xxviii. 29.) Rather may we be willing to submit cheerfully to his will and guidance in all *things and at all times.*

When Jacob slept he dream'd and lo!
A ladder vast and high,
With angels moving to and fro,
Descending from the sky.

JACOB'S DREAM.

BEFORE CHRIST 1760 YEARS.

"The land where thou a stranger now dost rest,
Shall be by thy unnumber'd seed possest;
Where'er thou goest my favour shall attend,
My watchful angels shall from ill defend.

SOON after Jacob had obtained the blessing by fraud from Isaac, Esau came in with the venison he had prepared, according to his father's orders, expecting to receive the promised benediction, but what was his surprise when he found that Jacob had supplanted him? Great indeed must have been his disappointment: and infinitely more severe will be their feelings at last, who, for the perishing things of time and sense, let go eternal realities; then take care how you trifle with your best interests. Esau obtained a blessing of his father, but it was only a minor one, it was not the

birthright blessing; and thus are many blest with the favours of Providence, who have no interest in the better things of God's grace; but these will end with life, which should make us strive after the richer favours of divine love. Esau now consoled himself that he should have an opportunity of revenge, for the days of mourning for his father he considered as being near, and then he thought he would destroy his brother. This was a dreadful spirit to indulge, and is what all should continually watch against, for we know not what will be the end of indulged hatred and malice. Rebekah his mother, fearing his intention, took measures to provide for Jacob's safety by proposing that he should depart to her brother, to which his aged father acceded; and having given Jacob the tenderest of *blessings, he was* sent away to Syria, to

his uncle Laban. Jacob had now a long and dreary journey before him, accompanied with painful reflections on his mind, arising from having parted with all that was dear to him, and perhaps also reflecting that his manner of obtaining the blessing had not been honourable. But it was not long before the Lord met with him, and dissipated his sorrows—for though he was to suffer for his fault, yet he was not to be cast off—the Lord will punish his children when they sin against him, but he will not forget them in the hour of trouble. After a long day's journey of forty miles, poor Jacob laid him down upon a hard stone, under the canopy of heaven to sleep; it was a coarse lodging, but here the Almighty was pleased to manifest his love and care towards him. As he slept, he dreamed that he saw a ladder that reached from earth to

heaven, on which the angels were going to and fro; and the Lord appeared at the top of the ladder, from whence he graciously addressed him, "*I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land wherein thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed,*" *&c.* (Gen. xxviii. 13.) This vision was calculated to comfort Jacob; the clear discoveries of the providence of God, as shown in the ministry of these heavenly messengers, and all under the control of their Almighty Creator, might compose and comfort his mind through all its wanderings. And it is said, for our comfort at all times, that "*the angels of the Lord pitch round about those that fear him to deliver them.*" (Psalm xxxiv. 7.)

The prosperous youth not long delay'd,
Advancing he salutes the maid;
Rolls the rough stone from the well's brink,
And quickly gives her flock to drink.

JACOB MEETS RACHEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1760 YEARS.

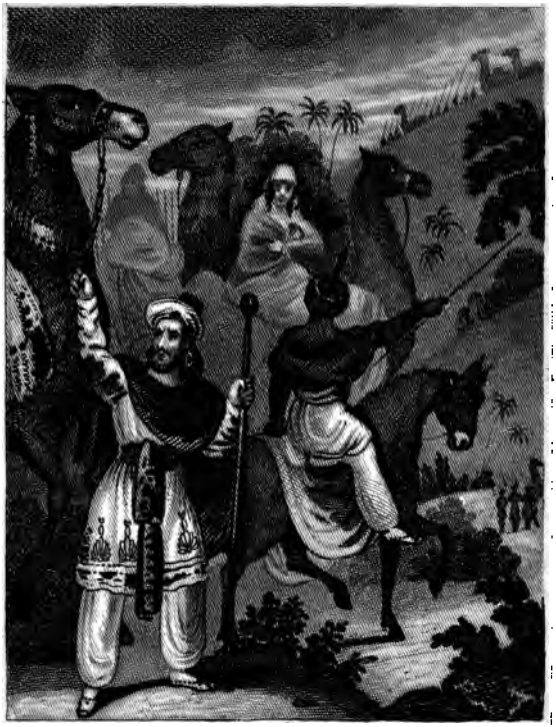
He rais'd the stone on which he lean'd his head,
Pure oil he pour'd thereon, and thus he said:
"Thou, my Lord God, this place thy house shall be,
And tithes of all thou giv'st I'll consecrate to thee."

WHEN Jacob awoke from his pleasing dream, in which he saw the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and the Sovereign Ruler of all things at the top thereof, his mind was greatly affected with the solemn circumstances in which he was placed; and, under an impression of the awful presence of God, he exclaimed, "*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*" He had at this time a very lively apprehension of the nearness of God; not but that he is always nigh,

though we may not be affected by his presence, for "*he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways.* (Psalm cxxxix. 3.) Jacob, perhaps, little thought of such a gracious visit; but God, who suits his mercies to the wants of his people, knew that Jacob would need his special presence, and he afforded it unto him. Jacob showed his piety and gratitude on this occasion; for he set up a pillar as a memorial of the Lord's favour, and made a vow, that if the Lord would be with him by the way, to feed him and preserve him, and at length bring him back to his father's house in peace, then the Lord should be his God; this place he called BETHEL, signifying "*the house of God,*" because of the Lord's appearance there. What a mercy it is that we may have a *Bethel wherever* we are! there is no place

in which we may not seek and find the Lord, and if God vouchsafe by his providence and grace, to guide us safely along, surely he his worthy of our gratitude and love; and if he brings us home at last in peace to his heavenly kingdom, we shall join his saints in praises to all eternity. Jacob, rejoicing under the Divine protection, now pursued his journey, refreshed both in body and mind. His willing feet hastened towards his uncle Laban's house, where he at length arrived in safety, proving to him that God's providence did attend him as was promised; and it was so kindly ordered that the first relation he met with was his cousin Rachel, who was designed to be his wife. Jacob met her at a well with her flock; to her he made himself known, and was soon introduced to Laban, *where it* was intended he should pass many

days, till, by the blessing of God, a way should be made for him to return to Canaan. The favourable impression made by Rachel on the mind of Jacob at their first interview was consistent with the design that she should ultimately become his wife; and the happiness he felt in meeting with so amiable a partner, was a reward for the obedience he had shown to the will of his parents in choosing according to their directions. From this interesting event, so productive of happiness to all parties, parents should be encouraged to be careful in the marriage of their children, and children should remember that obedience to their parents is ever attended with the blessing of God.



The Lord commands, his wives approve,
And all his train at once remove,
Slowly he marches 'cross the plains,
And Gilead's mountain safely gains.

JACOB DEPARTS FROM LABAN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1739 YEARS.

Full twenty years the happy exile stayed,
In Haran's fields, his labours well repaid;
So well his faithful industry was bless'd,
His flocks and herds through all the plain increas'd.

AFTER Jacob had spent a short season with his relations, during which time it is probable he had made himself useful about Laban's flocks, it seemed improper to his uncle that he should serve him for nought; he therefore proposed to Jacob that he should receive a reward for his labour, which gave him an opportunity of making known his affection for Rachel, for whom he was willing to render a long service, and at length received her to wife as his reward. In Laban's service Jacob spent twenty years; during which time he experienced many mercies and many crosses.

had been his conduct to him, and with his family and flocks commenced his journey; Laban was greatly offended at this, and pursued him to be revenged, but the Lord warned him not to touch his servant; thus showing what hold he has upon bad men, whereby he keeps them from hurting his people, and also how much he is concerned for the safety of those that fear him. If God is our friend, we need not mind who are our enemies; his goodness will enlarge our hearts, and by his everlasting arms he will preserve us from the most powerful of the children of men. Jacob's readines to obey the commands of God in returning to his own country, should teach us that in all the dispensations of Divine Providence, and in all the occurrences of life, we should first seek the approval of our heavenly Father, *and then obey* his will.

Loose me the mighty Angel cries,
Why dost thou grasp me so,
Until thou bless me he replies,
I will not let thee go.

JACOB'S TRIAL WITH AN ANGEL.

BEFORE CHRIST 1739 YEARS.

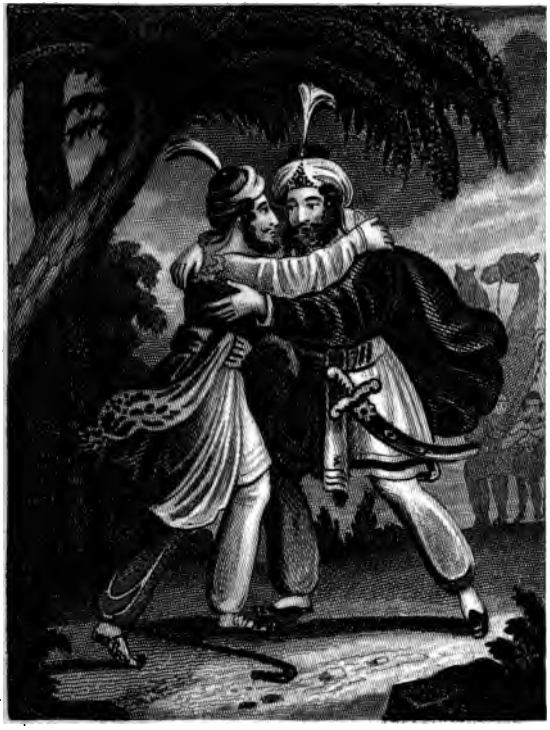
An angel seiz'd, the heavenly warrior press'd,
Nor would he let him go, himself unbless'd!
"Jacob no more, thy name shall Israel be,
For thou with God and man hast gain'd the victory."

TO restrain the fury of Laban, God charged him in a vision against offering any violence to Jacob, and when he overtook him, he only poured out some hasty language respecting his flight, which produced a reply from Jacob; who, in a very affecting manner, set forth the extreme hardships under which he had laboured in his uncle's employ, which Laban could not contradict; and therefore contented himself with merely blaming him for having left him in so secret a manner. However, all differences were now concluded; and, having made an agreement with each other, not to give any future cause of complaint

one to the other, they parted—Laban then returned home, and Jacob pursued his journey. It was natural for Jacob to hope, after a lapse of twenty years, that Esau's determination to murder him would have been changed, and he sent him a most respectful message, apprizing him of the great increase that God had favoured him with, and that he hoped soon to have the pleasure of seeing his face. But how was he distressed and alarmed when his servants returned with an account that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, who, no doubt, he concluded, were on their way to destroy him and his family; he therefore betook himself to prayer to God, for his protection, and in his petition urged the command which the Lord had given him to return, which he ventured to *hope would* be a reason why the Lord would

vouchsafe him support. Jacob, in his supplication to the throne of grace has set us an excellent example where to go in our difficulties, even to Him who is represented as "*a very present help in trouble;*" (Psalm xlvi. 1.) and with whom we may plead the promises on which he has caused us to hope. Having selected a noble present of cattle and sheep for Esau, with a view of appeasing his anger, Jacob sent it forward, with a very humble message—while he again retired to pray, and was indulged with the presence of an angel with whom he wrestled with all the ardour and anxiety that his distressing situation could excite; neither would he leave his hold till he obtained a blessing. Never was prayer more ardent, never was result more glorious; Jacob was suffered to prevail; but to convince him that he obtained not the victory

through his own strength, he was touched in the hollow of his thigh, and it was put out of joint. Be assured that God is ever ready to hear and answer fervent prayer, and graciously invites us to come in the name of his beloved Son, *"to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews iv. 16.) Let us learn from Jacob's wrestling with the angel, the great force and efficacy of sincere prayer. The prayers of Jacob were answered: the resentment of Esau had given way to brotherly love, and when he drew nigh he ran to meet Jacob, and fell on his neck, embraced and kissed him; and being no longer able to support his joy he poured out a stream of affection from his eyes, thus joining his tears with those shed by Jacob on this most interesting occasion; and they parted *from each* other in peace and love.



Jacob now to his Brother bows,
Who wears no terrors on his brows,
Friendly they meet with tears embrace,
And love and amity take place.

JACOB MEETS WITH ESAU.

BEFORE CHRIST 1739 YEARS.

The patriarch now, assur'd of heavenly aid,
Crosses the murmuring brook no more afraid;
His brother's troops he sees, not unprepar'd,
He knew he had himself a stronger guard.

IN wrestling with the angel, Jacob's thigh was put out of joint; this was calculated to prevent his being too much exalted at the favour shewed him; and it also tended to prove that it was through the condescension of God that he was allowed to prevail, for of himself he could do nothing against the almighty power of God; and it is his loving-kindness and mercy that we are allowed to prevail in prayer—and for our encouragement, it is said, "*God never bid any of the seed of Jacob seek him in vain.*" (Isaiah xlv. 19.) Jacob was now aware of the near approach of Esau; he

therefore placed his family in the best manner possible for flight, in case his brother should fall upon them; but his fears were all in vain, for Esau met him in an affectionate manner, and they fell on each other's neck and wept. God had softened Esau's heart; his malice and revenge had been subdued, and love now prevailed. When Jacob was distressed at the prospect of his brother's approach, he cried to the Lord, saying, "*Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother.* (Gen. xxii. 11.) And now he realized that God does hear and answer prayer, which should teach us to call upon him in the day of distress. Solomon says, "*a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.*" (Proverbs xviii. 19.) But God can make hatred to depart, and love and forgiveness to abound; *he changes the* lion-like spirit into the meek-

ness of the lamb. Thus was revenge turned into love and pity; and Esau who long thirsted for his brother's blood, dissolves into tears of joy, and melts into the softest endearments of friendship and affection. But we have no proof that Esau felt any thing more than restraining grace, which merely prevented his injuring his brother; and we should be anxiously desirous to experience that grace, which truly changes the heart,—and not only subdues sin but teaches us to hate it, and live to the glory of God. Esau at first refused to receive the present which Jacob had selected for him, but after being urged he accepted it. Jacob acted in a liberal manner, for he had received abundantly from the hand of God—and such should be our general conduct, for a selfish disposition is disgraceful, whilst an open, generous spirit well becomes

the Christian. Esau would have accom panied Jacob, but he declined travelling at so quick a rate, out of a tender concern for his family and flocks. Esau then begged him to allow some of his men to be his guard, by the way, but this he also declined: hitherto the Lord had been his guard, and he had reason to believe he would be so still. Thus these brothers separated in peace and love. Jacob having safely arrived in Canaan, he set up an altar in token of his gratitude to the God of heaven, who had made good his promise to his servant, and brought him back in peace. And while God is gracious and merciful to us, let us never cease to show forth his praise.

Two dreams surpris'd the noble youth,
Which he with undissembled truth,
Proceeds amongst them to relate,
And which increas'd each Brothers hate.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1729 YEARS.

"To these we'll sell the youth, nor need we fear
Of him, or of his dreams again to hear:"
The motion pleas'd, he's sold, the price is paid,
And thro' the deserts he to Mizraim's realms convey'd.

THE Patriarch Jacob had twelve sons, from whom sprang the twelve tribes of Israel, which we read so much of in the Old Testament. Among all his children Jacob saw none that deserved his affection more than Joseph; he was the son of his old age, the offspring of his beloved Rachel, and showed some traits of early piety, all which conduced to make him esteemed by his father. But his brethren cruelly hated him, for acquainting Jacob his father with their wicked conduct; and it is not uncommon for those who notice the bad conduct of others to be disliked by them; yet,

whenever we have an opportunity, it is our bounden duty either to reprove or to procure reproof for offenders. At the same time tale-bearing among young people, except from right motives, is to be discountenanced. We are to be kind to our brethren, and by pointing out to them their faults, endeavour to lead them to forsake all evil ways. Envy also actuated Joseph's brethren in their hatred—they could not bear to see him decked with "*the coat of many colours*," and sharing so largely in his father's love. Happy is that family where envy is unknown, but where harmony and love continually abound. Joseph was not only the favourite of his father, but also of Heaven; and was designed at a future day, to fill the highest post of honour and usefulness; he was furnished with some early intimations *of this* when he was only seventeen years

of age—he dreamed that his brethren and himself were binding up sheaves of corn in a field, when his sheaf stood up, and theirs all bowed down to it. And at another time he beheld the sun, moon, and eleven stars all do obeisance to him; which when he told his father, he could not help perceiving that it implied the bowing down of the whole family to Joseph; but for these things his brethren only hated him the more, while his father observed the saying; and he lived to see it accomplished, as the sequel of this interesting history will prove. But his brethren thought they would prevent the fulfilling of these dreams; and on one occasion, when Joseph was sent to them into the field where they kept their flocks, they plotted to take away his life; but Reuben, his eldest brother, advised them not to shed his blood, but to

cast him into a pit, from which he hoped to have an opportunity of releasing him, and restoring him to his father. This plan was adopted, and immediately the poor trembling youth utterly disregarded while in the anguish of his soul, was stripped of "*his coat of many colours,*" and thrown into the pit, in order, as his cruel brethren then thought, that he might starve there; and having so done, they sat down to eat bread. O how hard is the heart when envy and hatred have possession of it! At this moment a company of merchants were passing this way, by the providence of God, to whom they sold Joseph, not doubting but now they should most completely gain their end; and in no way could they have more correctly assisted the designs of God, who can make not only the friends but the enemies of those he loves to serve their cause.

She of her crime the youth accus'd,
Declares he press'd and she refus'd:
The chief not doubting of her truth,
To prison sends the Hebrew youth.

JOSEPH CAST INTO PRISON.

BEFORE CHRIST 1721 YEARS.

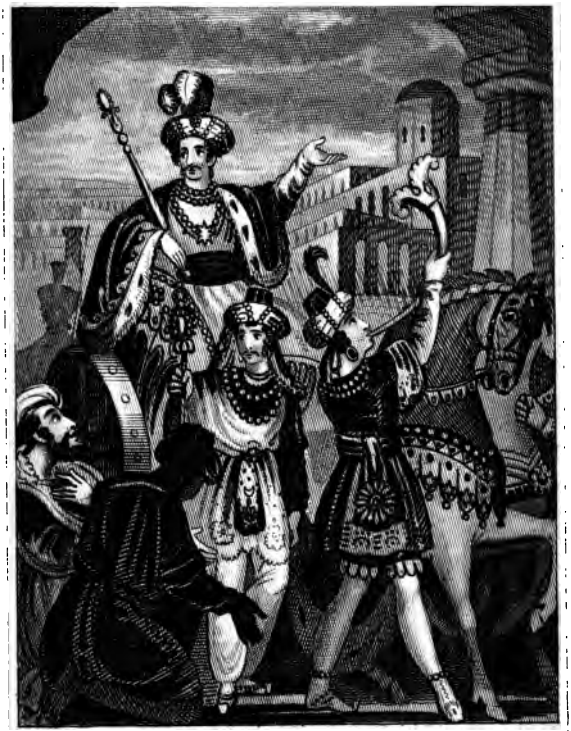
Silent he stood, yet bold, with no defence
Besides his conscience, and his innocence:
Laden with chains to dungeons deep convey,
Remov'd from the sweet light, and least approach of day.

THE brethren of Joseph were well aware that inquiries would be made after him, particularly by Jacob his aged father. They therefore thought it necessary to devise a plan, by which to impose upon their father and to screen their own wickedness: thus it is that one sin almost always leads to another. The way of iniquity is downhill, and if we once get into that path, we know not where we shall stop: consequently we have need to "*watch and pray lest we enter into temptation,*" (Matt. xxvi. 41.) The guilty brethren, to take off all suspicion from themselves, killed a kid,

and dipped Joseph's coat of many colours in the blood; this they brought to their father, pretending they had found it. With a kind of unfeeling taunt they begged Jacob to see if that was his son's coat, as though they were glad to behold their father distressed by the apprehension that his beloved Joseph had been torn in pieces by wild beasts. Thus their envy led them not only to act cruelly to their brother, but unfeelingly to their father also. Children should be anxious for their parents' happiness, as they expect the blessing of God, who looks with a frown upon such as dare to trifle with the peace and comfort of those to whom they owe their natural existence. Poor Jacob was overcome with the sight, and refused to be comforted, but to go mourning to the grave. Ah, how little distance can we see before us, and how ignorant we are of the designs

of God, who by this event was working for the future good of Jacob and his family. Let us therefore, learn to put our whole trust and confidence in his good providence. The merchants that bought Joseph, carried him down to Egypt as a slave, where it was the purpose of God he should one day be highly exalted; for with Joseph the road to preferment lay through the valley of trial and humiliation. In Egypt they sold him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, in whose sight the Lord gave him such favour, that he soon committed all the affairs of his house into his hands, and placed the greatest confidence in his conduct; but Joseph found that however pleasant his post was, it was the post of danger. Satan often spreads his wiles to entrap and ruin the virtuous; yet Joseph through Divine grace, was enabled to with-

stand all temptation. Potiphar's wife was a base and wicked woman, and spared no artifice to draw Joseph from the path of virtue; but he was enabled, with holy indignation and resolution, to say, "*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!*" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) But being resolved to punish him for contempt of her wishes, his mistress artfully accused him to her husband, and thereby procured his confinement in prison. Thus was he innocently brought into trouble for well-doing, and deprived of all his enjoyments because he would not commit sin. Herein Joseph has set an example worthy of imitation: whoever may tempt us, or whatever advantages may seem to arise from committing sin, the path of holiness is the only safe path, and the way of duty alone will secure to us peace at the last.



With Pharaoh's signet be invest,
In Princely garments be thou drest,
Ride in my chariot; and to thee
Shall wondring Egypt bow the knee.

JOSEPH'S EXALTATION.

BEFORE CHRIST 1716 YEARS.

Ambition sinks when towering to the skies;
But humble virtue from the dust shall rise.
Young Joseph, by his chains illustrious grown,
Drawn from the dungeon shares great Pharaoh's throne.

WHEREVER Joseph was, it is evident the smiles of Heaven accompanied him and blessed him. When in Potiphar's house he was highly esteemed by his master, and now he was cast into prison the Lord showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, who could plainly perceive that whatever he intrusted to him was well performed. In the prison Pharaoh's chief butler and baker were confined for offences against their lord; and while there they each had a dream which greatly troubled them, and which Joseph, under the divine blessing, was

enabled to explain; and, as he interpreted these dreams, so they came to pass—the chief butler was pardoned, and the chief baker was hanged. When Joseph made known to the chief butler what his dream portended, and that it would ere long be well with him, he entreated to be remembered by him, and to be brought out of captivity, for that he had been dealt ill with; yet this man ungratefully forgot Joseph, which should teach us not to expect much from our fellow-creatures; they may forget us, or if they remember us, and would serve us, they may not have the ability: but God did not forget his afflicted servant, for the time to turn his mourning into joy was now fast approaching. Pharaoh in one night had two remarkable dreams which greatly disturbed his mind, and among his magicians and wise men there were none

who could make known their meaning—this was reserved for Joseph, whom the chief butler now called to mind, and recommended him to the king, as being able to interpret dreams—he was therefore sent for in haste; and (taught from heaven) was enabled to to show Pharaoh that seven years of famine were coming upon the land, previous to which there would be seven years of great abundance, to give the inhabitants of Egypt opportunity of making provision for those distressing years. (Happy they who have grace to provide against dark and difficult days, especially the days of death and judgment!) And Joseph advised the king to choose out a wise man to superintend the laying up of supplies in storehouses, against the years of famine. This post of honour Pharaoh concluded could not be better filled than by himself, who had been

so highly favoured with wisdom to foretel the famine, and point out means to provide against such a calamity. He therefore exalted Joseph from the dungeon to be next to the throne; and he took the ring off his own hand and put it on Joseph's, and caused him to be arrayed in vestures of fine linen, and to have a chain of gold put about his neck, and to ride in the second chariot, while the people cried before him, "*Bow the knee,*" in token of honour and subjection. In this exaltation of Joseph, we may observe that though the Lord's people may be long in trouble, there is a set time for their relief, and that he will make things concur together for their good; "*though many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet the Lord will deliver them out of them all.*" (Psalm xxxiv. 19.)

I am Joseph your brother he said,
And still to my heart you are dear.
You sold me and thought I was dead,
But God, for your sakes sent me here.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1707 YEARS.

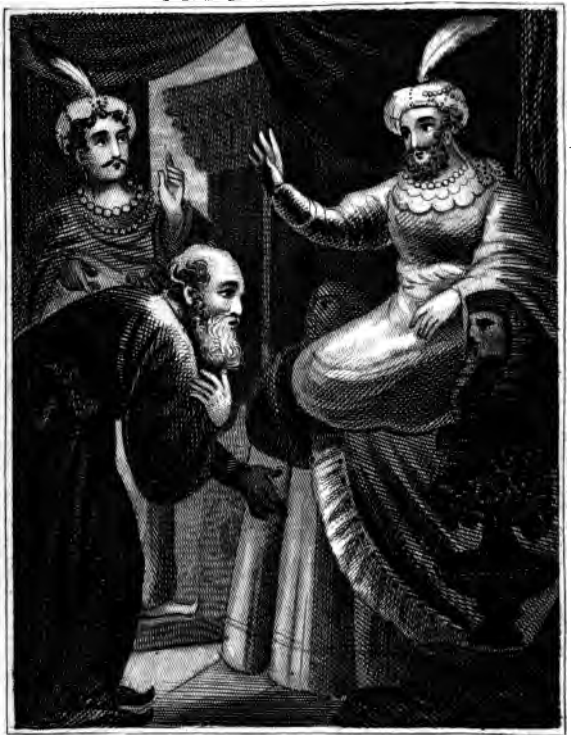
No longer Joseph could himself refrain,
But struggling nature broke th' uneasy chain:
He bids them clear the room, the crowd obey,
And none besides his wond'ring brethren stay.

AS soon as Joseph had received his commission from Pharaoh to lay up supplies of corn against the famine, he lost no time in executing the duties intrusted to him, and thus has set us an example to be active and diligent in whatever it may be our duty to take in hand. He was now thirty years of age, just in the prime of life; and it is in the days of our health and strength that we are more particularly expected to be active and useful. The days of plenty had now passed by, and the famine began to prevail; which extended even to the land of Canaan, and to the family of Jacob

Jacob, who, having heard that there was corn in Egypt, directed ten of his sons to repair thither, and fetch a supply for their wants; they all set off with the exception of Benjamin, and having arrived there, they bowed down before Joseph; thus fulfilling the dream which had given them so much offence, and to prevent the accomplishment of which they had sold their brother. It is thus God can bring to pass his own purposes, and cause the wrath of men to serve the designs of his all-wise providence. When they stood before Joseph, he knew them, though they knew not him, and he behaved distant towards them, calling them spies, and put Simeon in prison while the rest went to fetch Benjamin. This greatly distressed them and they concluded that this trouble had come *upon them* for the cruelty they had exer-

cised towards Joseph. It is thus that conscience speaks when trouble comes; and it is a mercy when afflictions are blessed to the awakening of our minds to the remembrance of sin, and to Godly sorrow for it. Having left Simeon bound, they returned to their father, and told him all that had occurred to them in Egypt, which led him to exclaim, "*all these things are against me;*" but the goodness of God was at this time causing all things to work together for his good. The famine still pressing hard, it became necessary to send again for corn; but they could not find acceptance without Benjamin went with them, but this Jacob at first would not consent to, until necessity compelled him; and they once more appeared before Joseph, having their younger brother with them; this it was that Joseph wished, and his heart was so full at the sight,

that he was obliged to retire and wept; after this he entertained them at dinner, and having caused their sacks to be filled, he sent them away: but first ordered his own silver cup to be put into Benjamin's sack, and then sent after them, charging them with the robbery, and declaring that he who had the cup should be his servant; when lo! it was found in Benjamin's sack. This was done to prove how they loved their younger brother, and whether they could willingly leave him behind; and how they loved their father, for Joseph knew how much it would affect him to lose Benjamin. Having therefore witnessed their feelings on this occasion, Joseph could no longer refrain from making himself known unto them, and exclaimed, "*I am Joseph your brother*," to their confusion and surprise; and then he comforted them.



When to the monarchs ear the fame
Of Israel's arrival came;
To honor him he gives command,
And sets before him all his land.

JOSEPH PRESENTS HIS FATHER.

BEFORE CHRIST 1706 YEARS.

Full seventeen years in Egypt s plains
The good old patriarch remains;
Thus like a sheaf of corn that lies
In harvest gather'd, peaceful dies.

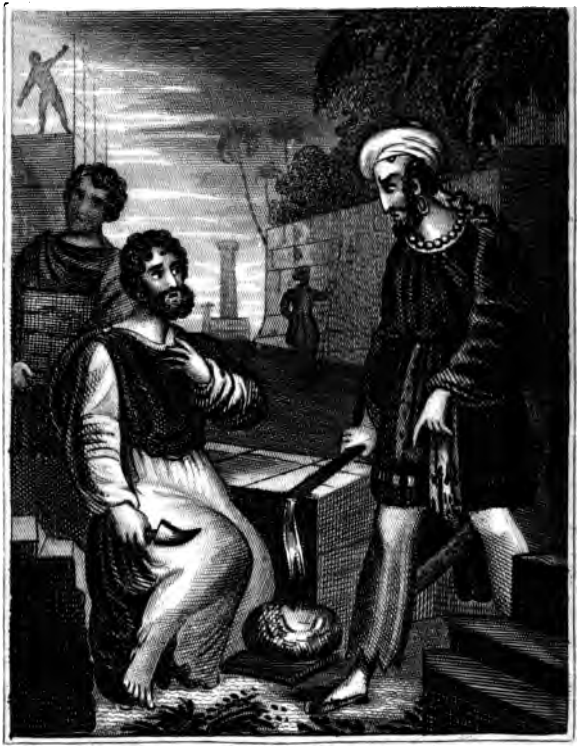
AFTER Joseph had comforted his brethren, and eased their minds from the distress they were in, by assuring them that it was to accomplish the purposes of God's good providence that he was sold into Egypt, he sent them for their father and families, with the kind promise that he would nourish them in the land of Goshen during the five years that yet remained of the famine: with this pleasing news they soon arrived at home; but it was some time before their aged father could believe the tidings; however at length he was convinced of the truth, and set off with all his

household towards the land of Egypt, where he was met by his beloved Joseph, whose face he never expected to have seen again; and truly affecting was the interview, they wept much on each other's neck, overcome with wonder and affection. Pharaoh was pleased that Joseph's father and brethren were come, and on Joseph presenting his venerable parent to the king, he was pleased with his appearance, and asked him how old he was; to which Jocob replied that his age was 130 years, and that few and evil had been his days: such is human life! Our days at most are but few, and sin alas, has made them evil; but happy indeed are they who have grace to "*number their days, and to apply their hearts unto wisdom.*" (Psalm xc. 12.) By taking a view of the history of Joseph, we *may learn that* however mysterious the

ways of Providence seem to be, there is always an end to be accomplished, which at last will lead us to admire the all-wise arrangements of God for the special benefit of his people and his own glory. Well may we put confidence in our God who sees the end from the beginning, and without whose permission "*not a sparrow falls to the ground.*" (Matt. x. 29.) It is true, his way is in the great deep, and often past finding out, yet he is a faithful God; and should our lot in life be bitter, and mingled with woe, and no bright days follow in this world, yet heaven will make amends for all, and eternity itself will not be too long to admire the wonders of His providence and grace.

Joseph was a striking type (as many of the Old Testament characters were) of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was hated of

his brethren, and so was Christ. Joseph was sold for money, and so was Christ. Joseph was raised to the highest pitch of glory, through deep suffering and humiliation, and Christ submitted to the deepest degradation, through which he arose to the highest glory and honour ; and as Joseph was exalted to be the saviour of his family, so is Christ exalted to be a prince and a Saviour to the family of God's redeemed people; but Joseph only saved from temporal ruin, while Christ saves from eternal misery; Joseph fed with the bread that perisheth, but Christ with the bread that endureth unto eternal life ; so that we may truly say of Christ, "*Behold, a greater than Joseph is here!*" (Matt. xii. 42.)



The rigorous king, with stern command,
Exacts the labour at their hands;
And hard oppression all their days
His iron hand upon them lays.

THE ISRAELITES OPPRESSED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1588 YEARS.

So great in numbers and in might,
The king grows envious at the sight;
And takes all methods to oppress,
To burden, and to make them less.

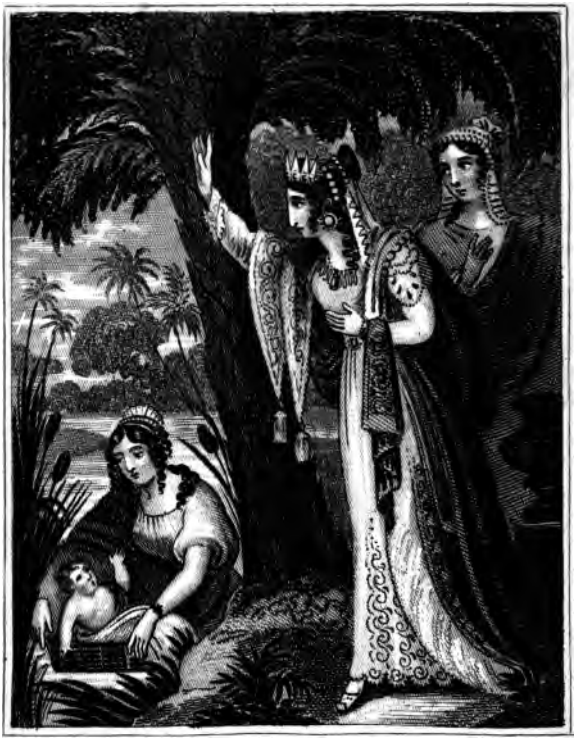
JACOB lived in Egypt, it appears, about seventeen years; when finding the approach of death, he called his twelve sons around his bed and gave them his blessing. Joseph partook largely of this benediction, in which his aged father noticed, in a striking manner, how great had been the afflictions of his beloved son, and what support God had graciously afforded him under them. (See Gen. xlix.) After this very interesting scene was ended, the aged patriarch died, and was taken home to his eternal rest. Joseph lived nearly *sixty* years after this event, and

before his death, assured his brethren that God would visit them, and bring their posterity back to the promised land of Canaan. (Gen. l. 24.) In token of this expectation he gave them a solemn charge in his last moments to preserve his dead body and carry his bones into Canaan, assuring them that God would in due time conduct them thither; to this lively hope we must ascribe his dying request, and not for his own glory. It was "*by faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandments concerning his bones.*" (Heb. xi. 22.) Thus, the death as well as the life of this eminent saint was truly excellent, and they furnish us with great encouragement to persevere to the end of our days in the service of God.

After this generation had all passed away, *there arose* a new king over Egypt, who

knew not Joseph, nor was sensible of the great obligations both himself and his people were under to Joseph's family—so prone are some to forget past favours, and to be insensible of the obligations to those who have been their friends and directors in the time of affliction. The lot of the posterity of Jacob was now greatly changed: when that family first settled in Egypt, they lived in the best part of the kingdom, and enjoyed ease and comfort; but now they were hated, ill-treated, and made to endure great hardships, and all because they were abundantly multiplied by the providence of God, who had promised to Abraham that his seed should be as the dust of the earth, (Gen. xiii. 16.) Their great numbers excited Pharaoh's jealousy; and, pretending to be fearful of them, lest they should side with the enemies of the land, he took all means

to oppress them, by making them work in the brick-kilns, and build cities; he also placed task-masters over them, who used them extremely hard, and oppressed them sorely; but such was the favour these distressed Israelites had in the sight of God, that the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied; this was doubtless a great grief to their enemies, who found their purposes and plans disappointed. We may learn from this oppressed state of the Israelites, compared with their former enjoyments, how uncertain every thing is in this life, and that bitter trials may succeed to great comforts; and we may also learn the folly of those who seek the ruin of God's chosen people, for they never can prevail against those whom he is graciously pleased to countenance and bless.



To bathe her in the sacred flood,
By Egypt worship'd for a God:
The Princess came. The ark she spies
nds her maid to fetch the prize.

MOSES IN THE BULRUSHES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1571 YEARS.

With tender look her eyes survey
The lovely babe, that weeping lay;
While pity touch'd her tender heart,
To take the helpless infant's part.

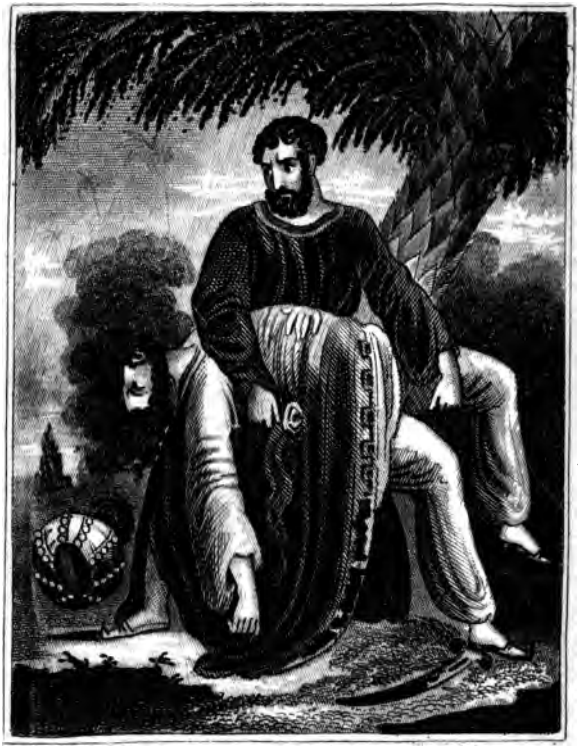
PHARAOH, king of Egypt, in addition to the cruel bondage and hard labour with which he afflicted the Israelites, published a barbarous edict, whereby the people were commanded to cast every son born to the Israelites into the river Nile, hoping thereby to prevent their increase, and so to keep them in more easy subjection to his oppressive hand. By this means it is probable that many were destroyed; but the enemies of the Lord's people were foiled in their attempt to accomplish their ends in a general way, for God was on their side however deeply they were now afflicted; and in the

end he made it appear that the wicked imagined a device which they were not able to perform. The Lord saw the misery of his people, and about the time when Pharaoh's cruel command came forth, the deliverer of Israel was born, in the person of Moses, who was hid three months by his parents from the destroyers, though perhaps at the hazard of their lives; but we find in Hebrews xi. 23, that it was by *faith they hid him*, for perhaps they entertained a hope that by him God would deliver Israel; at all events they knew it was their duty to endeavour to save his life. But they could hide him no longer than three months, therefore they made a basket of bulrushes, into which they put their beloved infant, and laid it among the flags on the bank of the river, and set Miriam, his sister, to *watch what* would become of it. Doubt-

less, this was an extremely painful task for the tender parents; but it was over-ruled by God for the preservation of the infant, and the future welfare of his people; for while the helpless babe lay exposed to every danger, Thumuthis Pharaoh's only daughter came along side of the river to bathe, her maids seeking a retired place and discovered a float the basket containing the lovely infant, which the princess ordered to be brought to her; at this moment the babe wept, which excited her compassion toward the little outcast: she was anxious to save its life, and have it taken care of. The child's sister, who had observed the conduct of the princess, proposed to fetch a nurse for the child, and called the mother of the babe, who gladly undertook a charge which afforded her one of the sweetest joys under heaven. The name Moses, which signifies

Drawn out, was given him as a memorial of this wonderful deliverance; in process of time he appeared at court as the adopted son of the King's daughter, and received an education suited to this elevated rank.

How wonderful are the ways of Providence! here we see the life of one saved, who was to be the greatest enemy to Egypt, and the deliverer of Israel, by the daughter of that king who aimed at Israel's ruin; thus God is never at a loss for means to work out the purposes of his will. And we also see that he can raise up friends for those who are in danger and in distress, when they least expect it; we may therefore with humble confidence leave our affairs in his hands, trusting in his mercy and goodness to "*deliver us in the time of our trouble.*"



Against a fierce Egyptian Lord
Moses arose, and took the sword;
Slew him and laid him in the sand
Which soon was known through all the land

MOSES SLAYS AN EGYPTION.

BEFORE CHRIST 1531 YEARS.

Moses saw a cruel master seize his slave,
Resisting, though unarm'd, and vainly brave!
Mov'd by the sacred spirit, his sword he drew,
And to his injur'd brother's rescue flew.

AT the court of Egypt Moses was provided for as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and became learned in the wisdom of the land (Acts vii. 22.) In this abode of grandeur and ease he passed the first forty years of his life: but we learn, in Hebrews xi. 24, that when he arrived at that age, he refused to be called the son of the King's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, at the court of Egypt, for a season; accordingly he espoused the cause of the afflicted Hebrews, and left the scene of his former enjoyments to look after the people of the Lord. He

formed his determination, in opposition to every worldly inducement, from a true sense of what he owed to God, proving himself thereby a devout and zealous servant of the Lord. In this praise-worthy line of conduct Moses stands as our example to "*come out from the world, to be separate from its vanities,*" and maxims, and to choose our lot with those who are living to the glory of God here, and are seeking a better world above. It is true the people of the world have often the largest share of the good things of this life, while the followers of Christ are poor and despised; but the pleasures of sin and the enjoyments of sense are but for a short period, while the joys that the despised Christian possesses even in this world are often great, and in heaven will endure for ever and ever.

After Moses had quitted the splendid court of Egypt to sympathise with the sorrows of his countrymen, he beheld an Egyptian (perhaps one of the cruel task-masters) ill treating an Hebrew, upon which he slew him, for his barbarity, and buried his body in the sand; this act of justice it may be supposed was designed as an assurance of what he would do, under the direction of heaven, at some future day, for the relief of his brethren. After this, Moses observing two of the Hebrews quarrelling, he reproved the agressor, which drew forth from him an inquiry by what authority Moses interfered, and whether he meant to kill him as he had the Egyptian. How seldom can we bear reproof, how prone is the heart to revolt at admonition! this arises from pride, and is a sad proof of the want of a meek and humble spirit. Moses had by

Moses beholds a bush on flame,
Which quickly might consume the same;
But stronger, brighter fires arose
And still it blazes [illegible]

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

"Thy sandals quickly loose, bold mortal, and retire;
The place is holy ground, and God is in the fire!
The God of Abraham, I, and all his favour'd race;"
Moses heard and kneel'd, and trembling, veil'd his face.

IN ancient times many eminent characters were shepherds; such was Abel, such was Moses, and we shall hereafter see that David followed the same calling; the two latter were taken from this office to rule over the Lord's people, who are "*the sheep of his pasture.*" In this employment they learned how to guide and feed their charge, which might be useful to them as an introduction to the more weighty duty of feeding and ruling the Israel of God. Moses passed the second forty years of his life in attending the sheep of Jethro, his father-*in-law.* During this period the

children of Israel sighed deeply under their cruel bondage, and their cry came up before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was now bringing about the time for their deliverance; and for this purpose an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses while keeping his father-in-law's flocks near mount Horeb. (Exodus, iii. 2.) To his great astonishment, Moses saw a bush burning with fire, but not consumed; and he turned aside to see this extraordinary sight, when he heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him out of the burning bush. He was now in retirement, and it is at such times that God often draws nigh to his people, for solitude is favourable to our intercourse with heaven. He was also well employed, being at the post of duty: and it is when we are so found that we are *most likely to* have the blessing of God.

When Moses had drawn near to the burning bush, the Lord was pleased to call him by name, and direct him not to approach too near, and to put off his shoes, for the ground whereon he now stood was holy. Putting off the shoe in early days, implied the same respect as putting off the hat now; and if it becomes us to be respectful in our approaches to our earthly superiors, how much more so when we approach the King of king's, the God of heaven! The Lord then explained to Moses his design in thus appearing to him; it was to commission him to go and deliver his children out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, and to bring them back to the land of Canaan, which he had promised to their forefathers should be their possession; for he was not insensible to their sorrows; he pitied their lamentable state, and his

gracious providence had now raised up an instrument by which to affect their deliverance. Moses was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent to open the prison to them that were bound, and to rescue the Lord's chosen ones from a worse than Egyptian bondage. Moses had a commission of mercy to the afflicted, and of judgment to the tyrant who oppressed them; and the Saviour was sent also to judge and condemn the prince of this world, that cruel enemy by whom his people were held in captivity; and let us exclaim with reverence and suitable humility, glory be to his holy name, he has accomplished the work which his Father gave him to do.

Behold the Lord before him stands!
Cast down thy staff the Lord commands:
Moses obeyd Not long it lies
But a huge serpent at him flies.

MOSES, &c. APPLIES TO PHARAOH.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

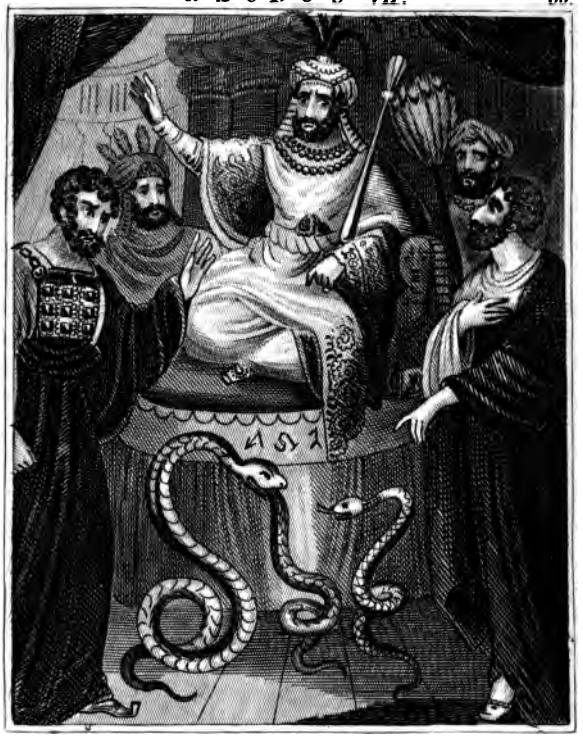
Moses reviews the high command,
Nor can he now reluctant stand;
And both the pious brothers join
To bring about the great design.

THE Almighty was pleased to order Moses to demand of Pharaoh the release of his people from bondage, but he entertained so mean an opinion of himself, and considered the work so very important, that he showed great reluctance to go, but the Lord promised to be with him, and gave him signs that he should succeed in the mission upon which it was his pleasure to employ him. The rod that was in his hand God turned into a serpent, and back again to a rod; he commanded Moses to put his hand into his bosom, when it be-

came leprous, and on putting it there again, it became like his other flesh; if the people of Israel would not believe his message, on seeing these miracles, he was to turn water into blood, as a further proof of his being sent of God. Still Moses objected to his commission; humility urged him a great way, but there seems to have been something of unbelief mingled therewith. At last the Lord overcame all his objections, and having qualified him for the work, he set out to his native land. (Exodus, chap. iv.) Whenever God requires an instrument to accomplish his wise purposes, either of mercy to his people, or wrath to his adversaries; he can raise one up, and, at his pleasure qualify him to perform any great work. Moses, accompanied by Aaron his brother, went to *Pharaoh*, according to the Lord's directions,

and demanded that the Israelites should be allowed to leave Egypt: this he would not consent to, but with impious boldness exclaimed, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go;*" and as a proof that he had no regard for God, or feeling for his people, he commanded the task-masters to be more rigid with them in the making of bricks, and so to increase their sorrows. This discouraged the Israelites, and they complained of Moses and Aaron as having been the cause of their augmented sufferings; but this was unjust, their efforts were right, though they had not succeeded as yet, Moses thought the case desperate, and therefore God determined to interpose, that he might make his power known; "*Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.*" We may

observe that the Lord sometimes allows his people to be brought into the greatest difficulties, that his arm of mercy and power may be more gloriously displayed in their relief. Let us beware of doubting the Lord's goodness and mercy, because we cannot at present reconcile his promises and providences; he works in a mysterious manner, it is true; but he is a God of equity, justice, and truth; and if we are in the dark now, a brighter world hereafter will clear up all our difficulties, and we shall adore him as an all-wise God for the way in which he led us through this wilderness world.



When Aarons serpent reared his crest.
He in a moment gorg'd the rest.
The harden'd king with impious thought,
Concludes the whole by magic wrought.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

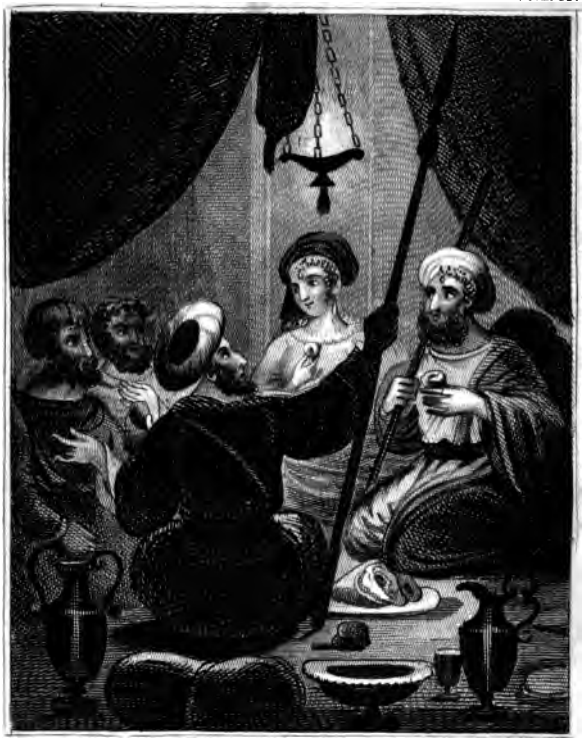
"With plagues on plagues I'll harden'd Egypt scourge,
Till they themselves your wish'd departure urge;
But first with wonders I'll your mission sign,
Their sense compell'd to own a power divine."

MOSES having made known to the Lord how the people were affected at the disappointment they experienced, on Pharaoh having impiously refused to release the Israelites, God was pleased to assure his servant, that he should soon behold the awful judgments which would fall on the head of the cruel tyrant; and that though there was a dark and heavy cloud for a time hanging over his beloved people, a bright day would soon dawn for their deliverance. Moses and Aaron again applied to Pharaoh, when he demanded a sign from them, and Aaron cast the rod upon the

ground, when it became a serpent; the magicians did so likewise, when Aaron's rod swallowed up their rod, thereby proving that he had truth and power on his side. (Exodus chap. v.) This miracle and the result of it had no good effect upon Pharaoh, therefore the plagues which God had in command were summoned to punish this cruel enemy of the Lord's children. The first of which, was turning the waters of the land into blood; this awful judgment lasted seven days, but without any effect; the second plague was innumerable swarms of frogs, which infested all the inhabitants even in the King's chambers; then, abundance of lice, then, the plague of flies. Now Pharaoh's heart seemed touched, but it only lasted just as long as the judgment continued. God then sent a heavier judgment, a very grevious murrain upon the cat-

tle; next painful and loathsome boils which afflicted both man and beast; then, dreadful thunder, lightning and hail; after this, swarms of locusts; and then, a fearful darkness that might be felt, which lasted three days, during which period the Egyptians never rose from their seats. Never was any land so awfully visited with judgment after judgment; and never did the Almighty give so striking a proof how he can serve his purposes, even by the most tiny insect that his hand has formed. During all these troubles, his own people were safe from calamity: he made a wonderful distinction in their favour, which was calculated to point out to the Egyptians their folly in oppressing a people so beloved of God. Often Pharaoh relented, and as often returned to his hardness and impenitency; he had hardened himself against God and his peo-

ple, and now the Lord gave him over to a hardness of heart that ultimately ended in his utter ruin. In him we may observe an exact picture of hypocrites in all ages; when they are in trouble they will make a show of repentance; but alas, as the trouble subsides, the heart grows hard again. Nothing short of the sovereign grace of God's Holy Spirit can effect a lasting change; for this grace we should earnestly and contantly pray, dreading a hard heart as the greatest curse under heaven, and esteeming a meek and humble spirit as the greatest proof we can enjoy of God's favour and tender mercy; frequently exclaiming in David's words, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*" (Psalm li. 10.)



God's passover they all prepare,
And in the holy banquet share:
A general gladness crown'd the night,
While they partook the social rite.

THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

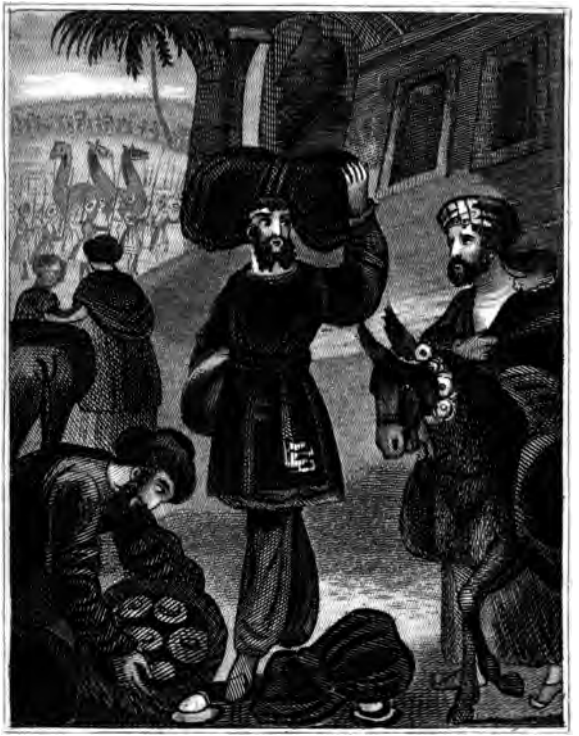
"A spotless lamb let every house prepare,
And every soul, the sacred banquet share:
With staff in hand, I order this repast,
Which shall to immemorial ages last.

THE nine awful judgments had been executed upon Egypt, yet without any real change in Pharaoh's heart, or the release of the Lord's people. Never was a man more infatuated than Pharaoh. Many solemn warnings had been given him, but in vain; and now the Lord decided to bring one more plague upon the land, which should accomplish what all the past calamities had failed to effect. He would destroy all the first-born in Egypt, both of man and beast; and so make his power to be known, to the joy of his redeemed people, and to the shame and confusion of their enemies. Previous to this solemn act of God's ven-

geance, the Israelites were commanded to eat the passover, so called, because the Lord would pass through the land and destroy the first-born thereof. Concerning this institution, the following orders were to be observed: every family, or if too few in number, two or more families were to unite and kill a lamb, which they were to eat roasted with unleavened and bitter herbs, with their loins girded, and their shoes on their feet, ready to depart, as the moment of their delivery was now at hand. Before they feasted upon the lamb, they were to sprinkle the blood upon the door-post of their houses, to distinguish their habitations from those of the Egyptians, and this was to be the mark of security to their first-born, when the destroying angel passed through the land. This lamb may be considered as a striking *type of* Christ, who is called "*the Lamb*

of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) And as the blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled on the door-post saved the Israelites from the destroying angel; so the blood of Christ, sprinkled on the conscience, preserves the sinner from the offended justice of God, and will be his security when the angels shall be sent at last to bind impenitent sinners in bundles, to be burnt in unquenchable fire. (Matthew xiii. 30.) The Lord's people were also to feast upon this lamb; and thus are true believers to feed upon Christ by faith; for it is of no use to us, to know that Christ died for sinners, and that his blood cleanses from sin, unless we are enabled to live upon him, and feel his blood applied savingly to our souls. The passover under the Jewish economy, has given way to the Lord's supper under the Christian dispensation. The

former was instituted the night before the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage, and the latter was appointed by our Redeemer, the night before his crucifixion, when he procured eternal deliverance for his chosen people. The passover was to be perpetually kept, and the Lord's supper is to be observed till Christ shall come again. May that Saviour be precious, who has done so great things for us, and may we be concerned to obey his command, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" (Luke xxii. 19.) If we do this in sincerity, and His blood be sprinkled upon our consciences, most assuredly no destruction can come near to hurt us; but if, on the contrary, we disobey his commands, we shall experience more than Egyptian bondage, and remain the slaves of sin and Satan, and shall soon be cut *down by the* hand of an avenging God.



Away in haste the tribes they send;
What they require they gladly lend;
And hasty bundling in their clothes
Their bread unbak'd, the nation goes.

THE ISRAELITES DELIVERED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

He urges them without delay,
To take their all and haste away.
Thus all the tribes of Israel gain
A glad release from Egypt's chain.

ACCORDING to the determination of God, at midnight the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, and slew one in every house, from the first-born of Pharaoh to the first-born of his meanest subject. The terror and distress of such an awful judgment cannot be described, and Pharaoh was now as urgent for the Israelites' departure, as before he had been obstinate to every application for their release: thus, we see how soon the Almighty can turn the hearts of daring and wicked sinners; he can make the most stubborn yield; he can bring the proudest spirit

down, and make his foes tremble before him. He had tried lesser judgments, but without effect; now he came very close to the king's heart by taking his first-born. Thus the Lord can increase the force of trials, till he makes his enemies fall at his feet. Let us fear having God against us, for who is able to stand before him when he is angry? Let us by obedience to his will and commandments, make him our friend and preserver. To his own people he his a merciful God; but to those that oppose his power, and trifle with his patience, he is a consuming fire. Six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, which probably were twice as many more, departed from Egypt at this time: their first journey was from Rameses to Succoth. What an amazing multitude to escape at once from the iron furnace! how wonder-

fully had they increased! It was not much above two centuries since Jacob's family (only seventy in number) came into this country, so greatly had the Lord caused them to multiply in the midst of their afflictions, and in opposition to every effort to prevent their increase. They took away much cattle with them, and their dough, which they had not had time to bake, so rapid was their departure: they also carried away great riches, which they had borrowed of the Egyptians at the Lord's command, and so spoiled them. This was a just punishment for the unjust detention of a reward for their labour; and in this way the Almighty saw his people recompensed with the wealth of the ungodly. Long had they been Pharaoh's bondmen, but there was a promise given to Abraham that his seed should inherit Canaan, and God was not

forgetful of his word, for no promise of his shall ever fail. In the time of their bitter calamity, perhaps they were tempted to say, "*Where is the promise made to our fathers; is not the Lord slack concerning his promise?*" (2 Peter iii. 4, 9.) In dark seasons we are apt to think the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, but it is not so; for he is a faithful, unchanging God. It is said, "*This was a night to be much observed;*" (Exodus vii. 42.) and truly it was: the providence of God displayed on their behalf; the solemn judgment inflicted on their enemies; and the appointing of the passover, all made it memorable to the Israelites; and, if a temporal salvation was worthy to be thus remembered, surely the redemption which Jesus Christ has wrought for his people demands our never-ending *admiration*, gratitude, and praise.

From Pharaoh and his impious land,
Having at last dismission gain'd,
The chosen tribes now take their way,
'nd soon encamp before the sea.

THE ISRAELITES ENCAMP.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

The monarch's former pride returns,
Much the prodigious loss he mourns;
Nor can he without anguish see
So many servants now set free.

THE wonderful deliverance of the Israelites from the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, being effected, we may observe the gracious manner in which the Lord conducted them after he had brought them forth, for it is said in Exodus xiii. 17, that he would not lead them through the land of the Philistines, lest the Philistines should make war upon them, which they were very unfit to engage in, having but just escaped from a hard captivity; he therefore led them about by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and departing from Succoth they encamped at Etham, on

the edge of that wilderness. Never were people more graciously or more gloriously led; for "*the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to direct them, and by night in a pillar of fire to light them.*" God was their guide, their guard, and their leader. They were indulged with sensible evidences of his presence; but now his people are to walk by faith; yet, blessed be his holy name, they are not left in the dark, for his word is "*a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path.*" (Psalm cxix. 105.) Christ has said in his gospel, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" (John xiv. 6.) And in the word of unerring truth, we hear the voice which says, "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*" (Isaiah xxx. 21.) The Almighty Deliverer of Israel had other purposes to answer in leading his people by this longer way; *he had not* yet reckoned with Pharoah for

the cruel usage of his people, nor for the impious blasphemy of which he had been guilty, in opposing the power and command of the Almighty. This tyrant was to be destroyed in the Red Sea; it was therefore necessary for the Israelites to be brought to the edge thereof, that the purposes of Heaven might be accomplished. And besides that the king of Egypt was to be destroyed, the Israelites were to have laws and ordinances appointed for them before they entered Canaan; their faith was to be tried, and their rebellious spirit humbled by the various exercises they were to experience in the wilderness. God knows what we are, better than we know ourselves; and he always leads his people in the path that is best calculated to root out sin from their hearts—to show them their depravity and helplessness—to hum-

ble them in their own eyes—and to bring glory to his holy name. His way is the right way, though to us it may seem thorny and rugged. To bring to pass these various designs, the Lord commanded Moses to instruct the people to turn out of the road to Canaan, and encamp by the Red Sea; this might have seemed strange to them, but they obeyed the order, and it was not long before they had to adore him for his wonderful appearance on their behalf. "*O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!*" (Psalm cvii. 8.)

Here Pharaoh's mighty host we find,
While Israel passes free,
Pursuid by raging waves and wind,
Are swallowed in the sea.

THE EGYPTIANS DESTROYED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

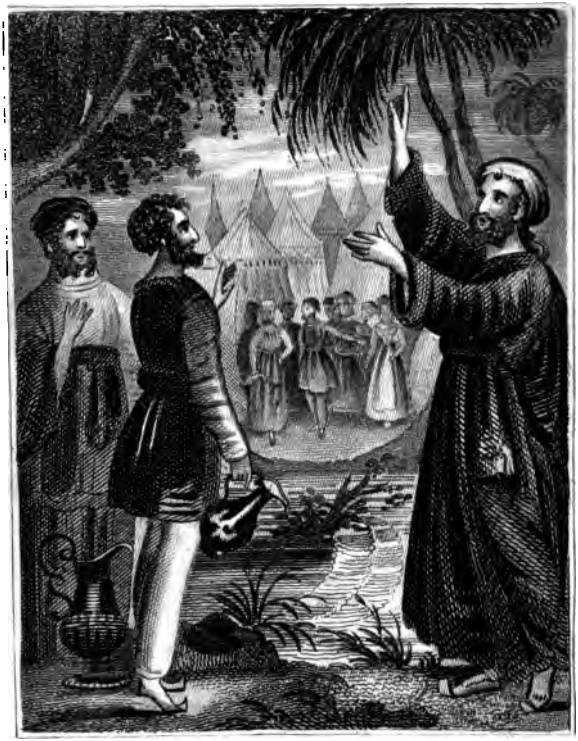
The king, his captains, warriors, all,
In one prodigious ruin fall:
While to regain their native plains,
Of the vast host, not one remains.

NO sooner had Pharaoh recovered from the fright occasioned by the death of the first-born, than he repented of having let the people depart; he therefore determined to pursue them, and, if possible, to bring them back. Accordingly, with his army, he went after them, little thinking he was running into ruin, and, while gratifying his revenge, at the same time was accomplishing the purposes of God against himself. He overtook the Lord's people encamped by the Red Sea, who, when they saw him approach, were filled with great distress, and some of them cried unto the Lord, while

others murmured at Moses, and gave proof of their distrust. It is true their situation was distressing; the Red Sea was before them—Pihahiroth's impassable rocks on the one hand—Migdol and Baal-zephon (supposed to be garrisons on the Egyptian frontiers) on the other hand—and Pharaoh with his army behind: they were in a great strait; but Moses had faith, and bid them stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The pillar of cloud, which went before to guide them in the way, was removed behind, and proved a cloud of darkness to their enemies, and thus prevented their approach to hurt the hindermost of God's people. After this Moses, at the Lord's command, stretched out his rod over the sea, and it divided to let the people through, the water, becoming a wall on each side of *them: thither* Pharaoh with his chariots

followed; and when the Egyptians were all in the midst of the sea, the Lord took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily, and would gladly have retraced their steps, but now it was too late, for the Israelites having all passed safely through, the Lord commanded Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea, when the waters returned again to their accustomed channel, and overwhelmed the Egyptians; and Israel saw their enemies dead upon the sea-shore. (Exodus xiv.) From this very important history we may gather some improving remarks. It presents to us a three-fold view of God. 1st. What a powerful and all-sufficient friend he is to his people; however distressing their situation, or great the obstacles that lie in their way; or severe the trials they experience, he is still to them a faithful and unchanging God. 2nd.

How dreadful he is to those who oppose his will; persecute his people, and make a mock at sin; he will reckon with them in awful judgment, if not always in this life, yet certainly in another, when all their sins shall be set in dreadful array against them. 3rd. What an omnipotent God he is, who can control the sea at his pleasure, and make water become as walls, to promote his glory, and his people's good! O pray for grace to love this mighty, yet gracious God. May we be enabled to live to his glory, in opposition to the world, the flesh, and the devil; then we shall have the unspeakable pleasure at last, to see these our worst enemies destroyed, and find ourselves eternally delivered from their hateful and distressing power, which will call for a loud and everlasting song of praise to our heavenly Father.



Behold! God made the water sweet
Of Marsh's Fountain; Is it meet
You thus should grumble: Cannot he
From every evil set you free?

BITTER WATERS SWEETENED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

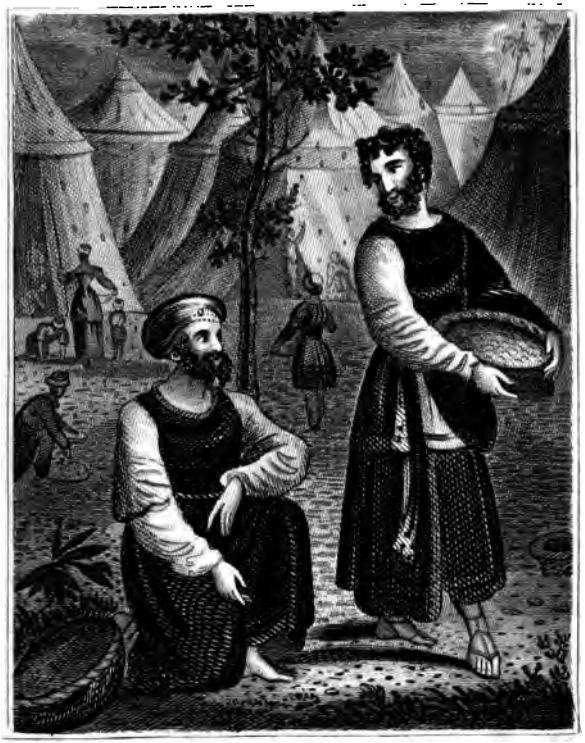
To heaven their leader flies, which sends relief
Heaven which can find a cure for every grief,
A tree of wondrous use, and power reveals,
Whose virtue, soon the brackish waters heals.

WHEN the children of Israel saw their once cruel persecutors dead on the sea-shore, they praised God for their deliverance; and for a time were obedient. They were in a good frame of mind now, and well would it be for us if we were always as sensible of our mercies, as we sometimes seem to be; but alas! we are changing creatures; our mercies continue, but gratitude soon dies away; and it is well for us that God changes not, for that is the reason why we are not consumed. When they came out of the Red Sea, they entered into the wilderness of Shur, where they remained

three days, and there was no water; from thence they removed to Marah, where they found water; but it was bitter, and they could not drink it: this was a great trial to them, and is a striking picture of life since the fall of Adam. They were no doubt delighted when they found water, but they were much disappointed when they tasted it; thus there are many things that promise fair to the eye, and much good is expected in the enjoyment of them; but sin embitters every stream; every thing below has an alloy mingled with it; and happy are they who do not expect too much from the things of this world. Here again the people murmured against Moses, who went with his trouble to the Lord: what a mercy it is to have a merciful God to go to in every time of need, for what else could *support* us under many of the trials of life?

The Lord was pleased to show Moses a tree, which when he had cast it into the waters they became sweet; whether there was any virtue in the wood, or whether it was only a sign, does not appear; but God ordered it to be used, and it produced the desired effect; so whatever God has appointed to be used as a means, whether for our temporal or spiritual advantage, we ought to be thankful for it, and diligently observe the same. May we not say that this tree was like what the good providence of God often proves to his people? it turns bitter things into sweet, brings good out of evil, and changes a seeming curse into a real blessing. And may we not see a resemblance of Christ in this sweetening tree? have not his bitter sufferings procured sweet peace for his people, and have not many found his cross a source of the great-

est joy under the bitter sorrows of life? When the Israelites removed from Marah they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water for their refreshment, and seventy palm-trees for shelter; "*And they encamped there by the waters.*" (Exodus xv. 27.) So uncertain and changing are the scenes of this life, that sometimes we are in distressing, and sometimes in pleasant circumstances. But we, as christians, ought to be joyful that all our journey is not imbittered to us, and that we are encouraged to look forward to a state of perfect rest and never-ending happiness, when we have done with all the painful, changing, and varied scenes of this mortal life of trial.



Manna to Israel well supply'd
The want of other bread;
While God is able to provide,
His People shall be fed.

MANNA SENT FROM HEAVEN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

Cool evening came, and all around
The winged quails o'erspread the ground;
And when the morn renew'd the day,
Among the dew the manna lay.

THE Israelites next journeyed from Elim to the wilderness of Sin, where they gave proof of a rebellious and discontented spirit. The provisions that they brought out of Egypt were now all expended, and they murmured against Moses and Aaron, as though they intended nothing less than to starve them in the wilderness. When they were first emancipated from the power of their oppressive enemies, and saw them all destroyed, they sang loud praises to the God of heaven; but now, while they distrusted his kind care, we hear them exclaiming, "*Would to* God we had died by

the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full!" (Exodus xvi. 3.) How ungrateful to God, and how unthankful to Moses and Aaron was this language! O indeed, what a wretched creature is man, when given over to the hateful feelings of his depraved heart; what will he not say, what will he not do, when passion possesses his mind and blinds his eyes? Neither his kindest friends, nor even God himself, can escape his resentful language. How strange to hear the people talked of being starved when they had their cattle with them, and were blest with the visible presence of that Almighty Being who had wrought such wonderful deliverances for them, and on whose power and kindness they might rely, to have their *wants* supplied! May the Lord give us

grace never to murmur at what we meet with; may we remember with gratitude his past kindness, and be led to trust him through all our future days. The Almighty was so gracious to his murmuring people, that, instead of punishing them, he petied them, and rained bread from heaven for their supply; and with this food he sustained them through all their journey to Canaan. Every morning the manna lay round about the host, like hoar frost; but in such abundance that there was enough for all the multitude to live upon. By their gathering it every day, they were taught their dependance upon God for daily bread; and our blessed Saviour has taught us to pray, "*Give us day by day our daily bread.*" (Luke xi. 3.) They were forbidden to gather manna on the sabbath; indeed there was not any rained down then, but a dou-

ble supply on the sixth day: this may convince us how much God thinks of his own day, then how careful we ought to be not to do any thing on the sabbath day, that ought to be done on another day. This bread came down from heaven, and Christ has said that "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven.*" (John vi. 51.) On him may we feed by faith, may we have daily supplies of this life-giving bread; and while they who partook of the manna in the wilderness only found it support their temporal existence, we, by feeding on Christ by faith, the true manna, shall find it to be the everlasting life of our immortal souls.

Moses upon the hill did pray,
For Victory to crown the day;
And when he held his hands on high,
Proud Amalek was forc'd to fly.

AMALEK SMITTEN.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

Then falls the foe, till silent night
Commences, and concludes the fight.
Moses hard by an alter rais'd,
And all the host Jehovah prais'd.

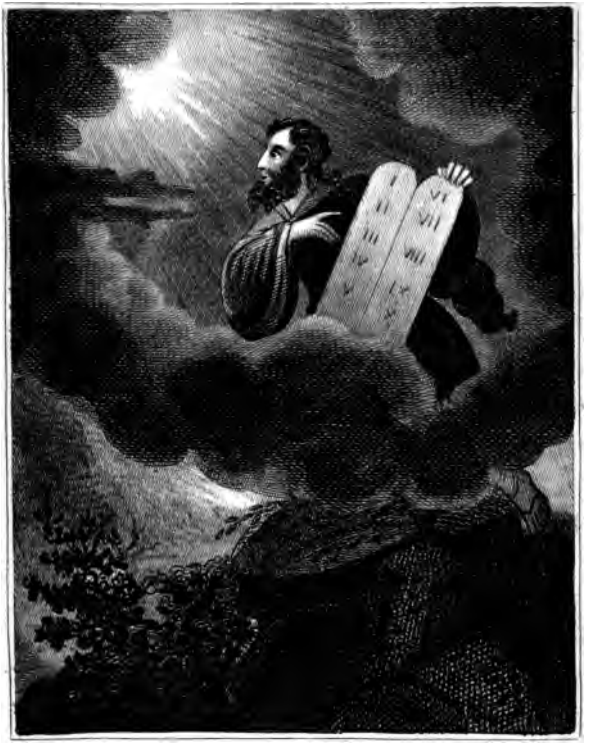
THE next journey of the Israelites was from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim, where they experienced the same distress as they had at Marah, that was the want of water. Their last trouble was the want of meat, and now they are again distressed for drink. How very uncertain our enjoyments are in this world, and how liable are we to difficulties and trials; the same trouble may often be repeated, and the only way to pass comfortably through life, is to live in constant dependance upon God, and be prepared for all that his unerring wisdom may appoint for us, being firmly

persuaded that every trial fills the proper place, and shall in the end prove for our good, if accompanied with his blessing. But who would have expected to hear the people murmuring again, after all the goodness that God had showed them by his interposing providence? yet, alas, so it was. When they came to Rephidim there was no water to drink, and they did chide Moses, and charged him with seeking their death, for which they were ready to stone him; this behaviour drove him once more to the Lord, who ordered him to smite the rock in Horeb, that water might flow out to satisfy their wants. Moses obeyed the Lord, he smote the rock, the water issued out, and they again partook of the bounty of God. (Exodus xvii. 6.) How far was this gracious dealing with such rebellious sinners beyond their deserts, and proved that

the Lord's ways are far above man's ways; for what man could bear that from his fellow-creatures, which God endures from those his hand has formed, and whom he could in a moment destroy? Let us as Christians admire his patience, and at the same time adore his matchless love.

While the people abode at Rephidim, the Amalekites came and fought against them; and it became necessary to take measures against these foes, therefore Moses ordered Joshua to choose out men, and fight with them; this was the means to be made use of, and when the means lie in our power, it is our duty to have recourse to them, looking at the same time to God for the blessing. While Joshua went out to fight, Moses went to the top of a hill to pray for the victory: thus should all our lawful undertakings be accompanied with

prayer. It is remarked that when Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. (verse 14.) This may teach us the vast importance of prayer, for it is only as we are diligent and sincere therein that we can hope to succeed against our spiritual enemies, from whom we have more danger to fear than Israel had from the Amalekites. When the victory was gained, Moses reared an altar, and called it Jehovah-nissi, "*The Lord is my banner.*" Thus he ascribed all the glory to God, and to him may we thankfully give glory for his mercies, for truly unto him are we indebted for all. "*And in Him we live, and move, and have our being.*"



Upon the Mount, here Moses saw;
And from Jehovah's hands
Receiv'd the tables of the law,
And bow'd to his commands.

MOSES RECIEVES THE LAW.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

Then rose the sacred morn that saw
The Eternal God proclaim his law;
Beneath the sound the desert quakes,
And Sinai to its centre shakes.

THE Almighty was pleased to lead his people through the wilderness, and to give them his holy law. This solemn transaction was now to take place; preparatory to which they departed from Rephidim, and encamped before Mount Sinai, from which mount the Almighty proclaimed the ten commandments in the hearing of all the people. Never was there so solemn a display of the divine glory as at this time: the mount was all in a flame, awful thunder was heard, and dreadful lightning glared, to impress the minds of the people with holy fear and reverence. And what

was contained in the proclamation from heaven? The four first commandments relate to our duty to God, in which we are told; 1st. Not to have any gods but him. 2nd. Not to worship any graven image. 3rd. Not to take his holy name in vain. 4th. To keep holy the sabbath day. The other six commandments relate to our duty towards our fellow-creatures. 5th. To honour our parents. 6th. Not to commit murder. 7th. Not to commit adultery. 8th. Not to steal. 9th. Not to bear false witness. And 10th. Not to covet. (Exodus, chap. xx.) In proportion to the love which a king bears to his subjects, and according to the wisdom which he possesses, so will he provide laws for the happiness of his people; if this be applied to the King of kings, who ruleth over all; whose love to his people is infinite, and whose

wisdom is all perfection, how very important and excellent must be those laws which he has provided for their government! The closer we are enabled to observe these commandments, the happier we are sure to be; but man is a fallen creature, and in no way able to render that obedience which a just and holy God requires. When Adam was created, he had the law of God written in his heart, and possessed an ability to perform his Maker's will; but when he fell, the divine image was erased from his mind, and he was no longer able to render perfect obedience, nor have any of his posterity since: such being the case, what was to become of fallen men, and how were the commands of a just God to be obeyed? Behold the goodness of God! he provided a surety for man in the person of his Son, for "*the Father sent the* Son to be the Sa-

viour of the world;" (1 John iv. 14.) and hear the Son of God declare his pleasure to stand in the sinner's place, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,*" (Psalm xl. 7, 8.) Accordingly he came at the appointed time, he magnified the law, and made it honourable; (Isaiah xlii. 21.) he fulfilled every tittle of it, he satisfied all its demands, and wrought out a perfect righteousness, which being imputed to ruined man, makes him acceptable in the sight of a once offended, but now reconciled God. These sweet truths the gospel makes known, and invites poor wandering sinners to return to their Maker, through the merits of their all-sufficient Saviour. May we have grace to accept the invitation, and receive the eternal life as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yet, as forgetting all they knew,
Ere forty days were past,
With blazing Sinai still in view,
A molten calf they cast.

THE GOLDEN CALF.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

While Moses in the mount with God remain'd,
Shameful idolatry the people stain'd:
Their leader absent, who should them protect?
Rejecting him, they God himself reject.

THE Lord having delivered the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, Moses was ordered up into the mount to receive a number of commandments relating to the future conduct of the people; for though the law, as promulgated by God, contained all the more important points for the solemn attention of the Israelites, there were other subjects which their heavenly King would have them apprized of, as demanding their obedience; for this purpose Moses was detained in the mount forty days and nights; at the end of which time, when the Almighty had finished communing

with him, he gave him two tables of stone, containing the ten commandments, written with the finger of God; in order that what had been proclaimed in the hearing of the people, might be preserved upon record among them. While Moses was with God in the mount, some of the people, who were always prone to murmur and rebel, grew impatient at his long absence, and were desirous to proceed forward, before it was the Lord's will they should do so; they therefore gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and desired he would make them gods to go before them, as for Moses, they knew not what was become of him. It was very recently that these people had heard the voice, and seen the terrors of the Lord, and were much alarmed at the sight, and yet here we see them quickly revolting against God. They had promised to

be obedient, but how they forgot their promises, and turned aside from the right way. In their conduct we may see, as it were in a glass, ourselves, for however good our feelings are at one time, and however fair our intentions, yet often do we turn back, and prove the depravity of our hearts! so that we have daily need to cry, "*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*" (Psalm cxix. 117.) When the people applied to Aaron, to make them gods to go before them, he commanded them to bring their golden ear-rings to him, with which he made a calf: and the people said, "*These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,*" (Exodus xxxii. 4.) Aaron perceiving the people delighted with their Golden God, built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast to the Lord; but it is not supposed that they

consider this image a god; but intended to worship the true God through this object, this was a violation of the second commandment, which not only forbids the worship of graven images, but of God himself, through so gross a medium. However wonderful it was that the people should be so infatuated; it was still more so that Aaron should be concerned in such a sin, against which he does not appear to have urged one word of opposition, but to have fallen into their design. Yet this is the man who had seen so much of God, had been so much employed by him, and was brother to Moses, against whom the people had been speaking. May we not say, Lord, what is man, the best of men? Happy are they who are always kept near to God, by whom alone they can be preserved *from* sin.

While with wrath his bosom glows,
The written laws he careless throws
On the hard ground, and at a stroke
The heaven-scribed marble Moses broke.

MOSES BREAKS THE TABLES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

Then to the calf enrag'd he goes,
And down the senseless idol throws,
Stamps in the dust, to powder grinds:
In keen resentment Aaron finds.

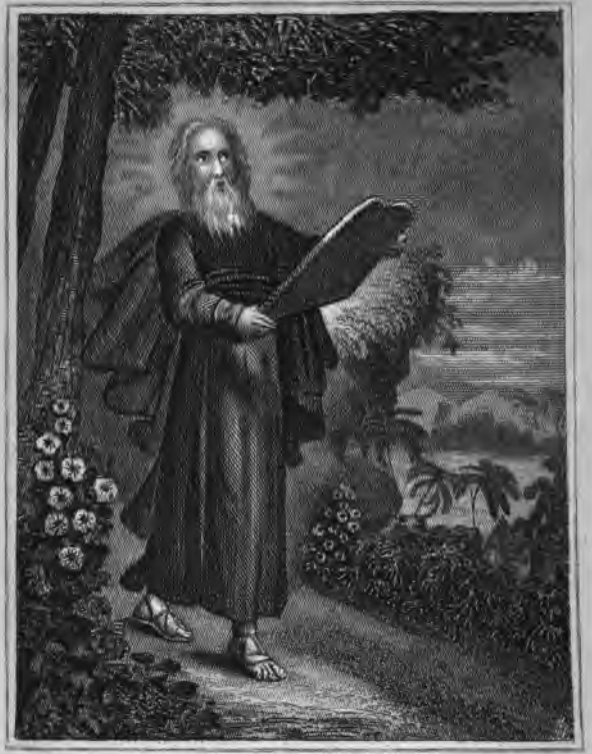
THE Almighty knew what Aaron and the people were doing while Moses was on the mount, and he informed Moses of it, and desired him to go down to them, threatening at the same time to destroy them for their misconduct, while he would make of Moses a great nation. What a dreadful thing sin is! It exposes us to the wrath of God, who knows all our actions, thoughts, words, and deeds; and were it not that he is as infinite in mercy, as he is in greatness, he could not bear with sinners in the manner that he does. Moses was indulged with the nearest intercourse with God that any

man ever had since the fall of Adam: he lost not a moment in pleading with the Almighty for Israel, and came not down from the mount till he had succeeded in turning away the fierce anger that threatened to destroy the people. Here we see the amazing efficacy of fervent prayer and perseverance; what indeed can it not effect? We are also taught a lesson of generous conduct; for had Moses been selfish, and sought his own advancement, he might have suffered the destruction of Israel. Here we are likewise led to think of Christ, who "*ever liveth to make intercession for poor offending sinners.*" (Heb. vii. 25.) When Moses had so far succeeded for the Israelites, he went down from the mount with the Two Tables of the Law in his hand. and when he drew near *enough to* see the golden calf, he became

so exceedingly angry at the sight, and indignant at their idolatry, that he threw the tables from his hands, and brake them. After this he commanded the golden calf to be reduced to powder, and scattered it upon the water, of which he made the people drink; for we shall surely taste the bitterness of our transgressions, and be made ashamed of our folly in sinning against God. He then severely reproved Aaron for his misconduct, who attempted to excuse himself by stating the determination of the people to have an image; but we must always bear in mind, that not any thing can be admitted as an excuse for sin; if men threaten us, we have a gracious God to go to by prayer; and if they would draw us into sin, the Holy One of Heaven most certainly will call them and us to account.

Moses succeeded with the Almighty

when on the mount, that he would not destroy all the people, nevertheless he showed his great displeasure at their offence; and about three thousand fell by the sword of the Levites who had been kept from the idolatry, and were now permitted to come forth in their zeal as executioners of the rebellious sinners. It is a great mercy to be kept from sin in a time of almost general defection, to be a decided character, to be on the Lord's side; an enemy to sin is a friend to holiness, neither ashamed of, nor a shame to, religion; and proving by our lives and conversation whose we are, and whom we serve, even a God of purity and love.



But now engraved a fresh appear,
The tables which God gave the seer:
Bright as the shining source of day,
He down the mountain takes his way.

THE TABLES RENEWED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1491 YEARS.

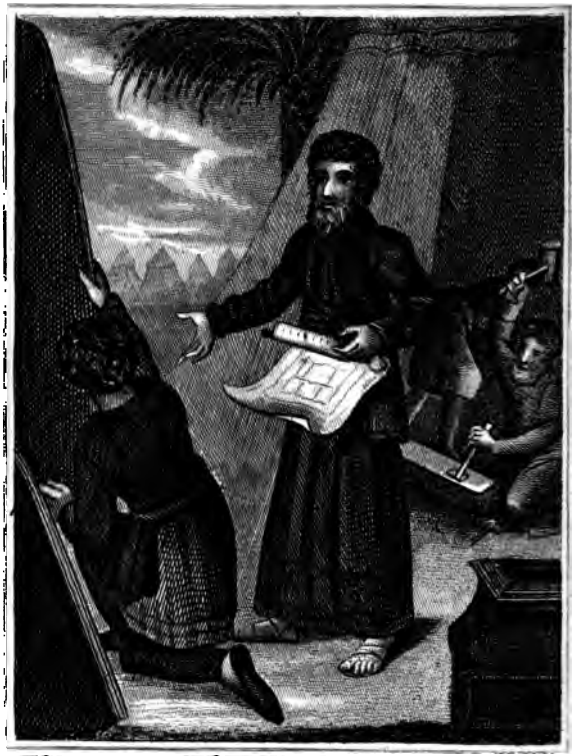
Then with his hand, Jehovah draws,
On the hard stone his righteous laws;
The Laws he had from Sinai spoke,
Which lately had been doubly broke.

THE Almighty was so highly offended with the transgression of the Israelites in making the golden calf, that he did not go with them, lest their rebellious conduct should cause his anger to consume them; but he promised to send his angel before them. It is an awful thing when we have so offended God, as to cut off all intercourse with him; and nothing separates between the Lord and his people but sin. O for holy fear, and a tender conscience, may we dread to offend our gracious God! While the Lord was angry with the people, he still showed favour to his servant Moses,

for those that honour him, as Moses did, he will honour, (1 Samuel ii. 30.) and he met him in the tabernacle, and talked with him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. It must have been encouraging to the penitent part of the people, to see the cloud abiding over the tabernacle, while Moses, their intercessor, was within, talking with God. And it may well be encouraging to poor sinners to remember that Christ, who is the Advocate with the Father, (1 John ii. 1.) is ever interceding in heaven for them, and with him the Father is ever well pleased. Moses could not be content with the guidance of an angel only; nothing but the presence of God would be sufficient for the safety and happiness of the people; and nothing less than this can satisfy our souls, while passing through this world of danger *and sin.* God at length promised Moses

that his presence should go with them, and this opened a door for the renewing of the tables of the law. The Lord ordered him to hew two tables like the former, which he did, and carried them up to Mount Sinai, when the Lord once more wrote his holy law. After Moses had been indulged with sweet intercourse with God in the tabernacle, and had succeeded for his presence to accompany the people, he was emboldened to ask God to show him his glory In answer to this pious and bold petition, (which cannot be granted while we are in a body of flesh and sin, as it would be more than the human eye could bear) the Lord proclaimed his name in Moses' hearing; and never under the Jewish dispensation did he give a more encouraging display of himself. "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and*

abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus xxxii. 6, 7.) O what would become of sinners if God was not a merciful Being? But we must bear in mind that he is also a just God, and will not clear the guilty, unless they are interested in that Saviour who has satisfied divine justice on their behalf. After this, Moses descended with the tables, and his face shone, though he knew it not. He had been so near God, that he had, as it were, embibed some of the rays of heaven; thus the nearer we get to God, the more we shall be like him, the more humble we shall be as regards our own attainments.



The appointed workmen God had taught:
In the great charge successful wrought:
The Tent, and each utensil made
In order as the Lord had said

THE TABERNACLE REARED.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Now, while the tribes attentive stand,
The holy prophet gives command,
That all the men, with free consent,
Should add to this, his holy tent.

THE construction and seting up of the Tabernacle is the next thing to be considered; and to obtain some knowledge of this building and its contents, it will be necessary to refer to the 25th and following chapters of Exodus, where we find that while Moses was in the mount the first time, the Lord gave him directions about this building, which was to be so constructed, as to be taken to pieces, and carried with them on their journeyings. The Tabernacle where the Lord talked with Moses (see chap. xxxiii. 7.) was a mere temporary building, and not the one about which he had received special instructions. The peo-

ple were to furnish all the materials that would be necessary, and it was but reasonable they should gladly offer all that was needed, as God had given them the property of the Egyptians, and therefore they only returned what the Lord had bestowed upon them; and we find their willingness and liberality were so great as to require to be restrained. (chap. xxxvi. 6.) May we never be destitute of a willing heart to devote what we possess to the cause and glory of God. The Tabernacle was to consist of boards fixed upright in sockets, over which several coverings were put for hangings, and for shelter from the weather. In this was an ark, made of wood, which resembled a chest, overlaid and lined with gold, in which were deposited the Tables of the Law. Over the ark was the mercy-seat, a solid plate of gold, which just covered

the ark, at each end of which was a golden cherubim, whose wings were spread over it; here the Lord promised to meet with Moses and instruct him. There was also a table made, on which the shewbread was to be put; twelve loaves were to be constantly kept upon it, one for every tribe, which were to be replaced from time to time, and the bread that was removed was for the priests. (Leviticus xxiv. 5, &c.) Here also was a candlestick made of gold, of curious workmanship, containing many lights, which this building needed, as there were no windows to it. In addition to these things an altar was made to offer sacrifices upon, and another on which to burn incense; also a laver of brass in which the priests were to wash. It required very skilful hands to perform the work necessary for the furniture of this sacred edifice, and

God, who has all hearts under his control, qualified men accordingly, as we read in Exodus xxxi. 3, &c. To his good providence we are indebted for our abilities, and it becomes us to use our faculties to his praise and glory. All things being completed according to the pattern which God had given Moses, the tabernacle was reared on the first day of the first month, when every thing was placed according to divine direction. May it not be remarked that it is well to begin every new year, and indeed every fresh period of our time, in a manner that shall be to God's glory, for he truly is entitled to the first and best of all we possess. When the building was finished, the glory of the Lord filled it; thus he took possession of his house of prayer and praise. "*And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.*" (Ex. xxix. 43.)

ON THE SACRIFICES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Seven days the sacred rites require,
And during which the priests retire;
The eight, the destin'd victims bleed,
And they to sacrifice proceed.

THE appointments under the Jewish economy generally, are to be considered as shadows or types, of which Christ and his gospel are the substance; and in no instance does this more strikingly appear, than in the various sacrifices of which the first part of the book of Leviticus treats. From the earliest ages sacrifices were offered; we find Abel brought of his flock an offering to God. (Genesis iv. 4.) Noah when he came out of the ark, presented a burnt offering to the Lord, (Genesis viii. 20.) and in them no doubt these pious patriarchs had reference to Christ, who is strikingly called,

"*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*" He was the grand object to which they looked by faith ever since the fall of Adam, as the Saviour who should come, and put away sin by sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews ix. 26.) The offerings hitherto made, had in general been voluntary acts of the Lord's people, but now the Almighty was pleased to constitute it a part of their religion; and we find every circumstance necessary to the right performance of this duty clearly made known by God There were to be sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, and meat-offerings; these were to be attended to by all the congregation; it was God's appointment, and only by a diligent attention thereto, could they expect his favour. Christ is our great high-priest, who was *himself* the one all sufficient Sacrifice for the

sins of the world. The people were to confess their sins over the head of the victim they brought: and while we look to Christ as our sacrifice, it becomes us with broken and contrite hearts to acknowledge that we are sinners. The blood of the victim was to be poured out; so was Christ's precious blood poured out before God, as the price of our redemption; and only as our consciences are sprinkled with that blood, and our souls cleansed thereby, can we be pardoned and accepted by a just and holy God. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away their sins; (Heb. x. 4.) but herein they were obedient to the divine command, and in offering these things pointed to the one all-sufficient Oblation, that in God's own time was to procure pardon and acceptance for ruined sinners. These offerings were to be brought on all

occasions, by all persons, and were accepted for every age and condition. Thus is Christ's sacrifice suited to all; none are so good as not to stand in need of it; none are too bad to experience its efficacy; and there is no other way of salvation. It must have been a matter of joy indeed to the humble penitent Israelite, that God was pleased thus to provide a way in which pardon and peace might be granted; and to believers it ought ever to be a source of joy and gratitude, "*that God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (John iii. 16.)

His Hands a golden Censer held,
With burning Coals and Incense fill'd,
Which clouded all the holy Room
With odrous Steams of rich Perfume.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

By consecration to prepare
The priests, was first the prophet's care;
Aaron in sumptuous robes was drest,
And stood appointed God's High Priest.

THE service of the tabernacle required priests; God was therefore pleased to make provision accordingly, by choosing Aaron to be high-priest, and his sons priests under him, whose dress was to be very singular, of which we find the particulars in Exodus xxviii. The most striking parts of the high-priest's dress were: 1st. The ephod, which was the outside garment, into which much gold was woven, resembling a short coat without sleeves, that buttoned tight to the body, having a girdle of the same. It was fastened together on the shoulders with

two precious onyx stones, set in go
which were engraven the names o
twelve tribes of Israel. 2nd. The b
plate, which was fastened to the e
with chains of gold, and consisted
rich piece of cloth, made of gold, and
purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen
was one of the most curious and val
ornaments worn, for in it were set in
twelve precious stones, on each of
was engraved the name of one o
tribes; this was very significant, and
lead us to think of that great High-
who has all his saints very near his
Upon this breast-plate was also place
Urim and Thummim, which signify
and perfection. It is supposed that
words were woven into the breast-
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high-priest should be instructed i

divine will, in all difficult cases, to the general good, and should be the oracle of God to them. Christ is the light of his people, and in him dwells infinate perfection: he is made of God unto them, wisdom, (1 Cor. i. 30.) and the Holy Spirit directs them into all truth, (John xvi. 13.) 3rd. The robe of the ephod, all of blue, which Aaron was to wear under the ephod, round the bottom of which, being as low as the knees, were hung alternately a golden bell, and a wooden pomegranate of various colours; the pomegranates were for ornament, and the bells being heard by the people in the outer court, when Aaron went in to the holy place to offer incense would be calculated to lead them to serious devotioo. 4th. Aaron was also to wear an embroidered coat of fine linen under the other priestly garments, which reached to

his feet, with sleeves down to his wrist, and fastened round him with a girdle of needlework. 5th. A mitre of fine linen was also to be worn by him, on the front of which was to be placed a plate of gold, engraven with these words, "*Holiness to the Lord.*" When the clothing was finished, the priests were clad therein, and consecrated for the sacred work, on which occasion sacrifices were offered, for the priests themselves needed cleansing; but the great High-priest of our profession is the Lord Jesus Christ, who needed no sacrifice; he was himself the atonement for his chosen; and having such an High-priest, we are encouraged and invited to draw near to God through him; and in full assurance that for his sake we shall find acceptance with our heavenly Father.

See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the veil appear;
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer.

FIRE DESCENDS ON THE ALTAR.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Fire from the skies descending plays,
And makes the holy victim blaze;
The nation shouts aloud, and all
Adoring, on their faces fall.

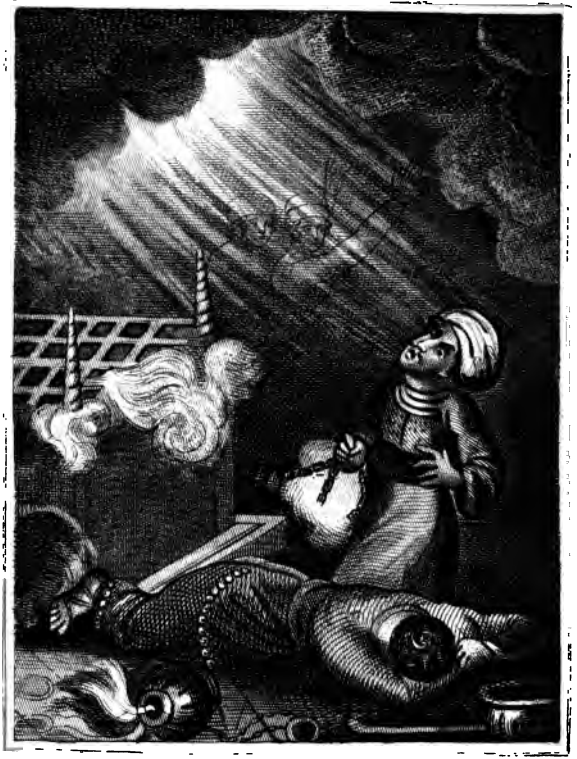
THE priests having been appointed to the service of the Tabernacle, they immediately set to work about holy things. This ought to teach us that whatever our calling may be, we should be diligent in performing it; and if this is correct as regards our temporal affairs, how much more so must it be with respect to the ways of the Lord! for though all are not called to the public ministry, yet all are called to be diligent in the service of God as they have opportunity, and especially as regards that which relates to their own salvation. Aaron was commanded to offer sacrifices for him-

self and the people, which he did, and God was pleased to testify his acceptance by sending fire from heaven, which consumed the burnt-offering. It must have been a source of the greatest joy to the sincere offerer, that the Lord thus accepted what was presented by the people, and that though their sins might have brought his wrath down, yet the fire fixing upon the offering proved that he accepted it in their stead: and here it may be profitable to call to mind the provision that God made for sinners in the person of his only Son: for we must never lose sight of Christ in the sacrifices recorded in the Old Testament, for they all have allusions to him. When his fierce wrath might have fastened on ruined man, and sunk him eternally down to the lowest pit of destruction, he was pleased to accept the offering which Christ

made for sinners; there his anger and justice fixed, and obtained full satisfaction: blessed be God for Jesus Christ, and his all-sufficient atonement! The fire was of God's kindling that consumed the acceptable offering; and only as his grace works in our hearts, shall we be enabled to please him; for we have nothing worthy of his notice, but what we first received from him, and we have daily need of grace to serve him aright.

God kindled the fire upon the altar, but the priests were to keep it alive by replenishing it with fuel; thus the Lord commences the work of grace in the heart of man, and he alone can carry it on; but it is by the use of means it is carried on, and we are required to give constant attention to the means that God has appointed. This fire was never to go out, (Lev. vi. 13.)

and surely God's work in the heart will never die away; he will certainly acknowledge, and at length complete that which his good Spirit has begun, which should encourage us to go forward in the ways of the Lord, and to hope in his mercy, believing that he will not forsake the work of his own hands. When the people saw this display of the divine power, they fell on their faces, and gave glory to God: and it well becomes us to give praise to his holy name for all the manifestations of his love towards us; for if the Lord accepts us and our services, it is much more than we deserve, and proves his great condescending mercy and grace to fallen man.



Swift from the Lord directly came
On the young men a sheet of flame,
And both the youths it breathless lays;
Wrapp'd in one vast surrounding blaze

NADAB AND ABIHU BURNT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Bold Nadab and Abihu here prepare,
The daily incense in their course to bear:
They saw the smoke in gloomy curls retire,
Their incense kindled with unhallow'd fire.

The office of the priesthood being now settled, and the service of the Tabernacle established, there was a prospect of things going on well, when an awful breach was made in the family of Aaron. He had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, who were all appointed to the priesthood as assistants to their father; but Nadab and Abihu had the honour only for a very short season, for immediately after their appointment, they were cut off by an offended God for offering strange fire before him. The priests were to burn incense of a peculiar quality and richness, (Exodus

xxx. 34.) but it is probable the incense they offered was not of this description; they burnt it with common fire, and not with that lately kindled by God. It is likely it was done in a thoughtless, presumptuous manner, and it is to be feared they had been drinking more than they ought at the feast of the peace-offering, and drink-offering; for immediately after this solemn act of judgment, the priests were forbidden in future to drink wine or strong drink in the Tabernacle. It is a most awful thing to trifle with the worship of Almighty God. We should learn from the fatal miscarriage of these priests, always to serve God in his own appointed way, and to come before him with reverence and godly fear; for though he permits his people to have fellowship with him in his house of prayer, *he will not* permit unholy familiarity; for

he is the high and lofty One, the great and holy Jehovah, as well as the God of all mercy and grace. These are very suitable words of Solomon, "*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.*" (Eccles. v. 1,) Happy would it be if all who attend the courts of the Lord had these words always on their minds. If these priest had given way to an abuse of the wine if the offerings, their crime was not a small one, because of the character they sustained, and the place they were in. The abuse of the good things of Providence is a crime in all cases. Well therefore does it become us to be circumspect in the enjoyment of what God has given us, for we are daily in danger of falling into sin: Satan endeavours to make every thing around us a snare to us, and

will entrap us therein, unless we "*watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.*" It is remarkable that as Nadab and Abihu sinned by offering strange fire, so they were destroyed by fire: sometimes sin is its own punishment. When Aaron offered the sacrifices, according to divine appointment, the fire from heaven consumed them: but when these priests acted contrary to the command of God, the fire of divine justice rested on themselves: and thus at the last great day, all who have sought salvation according to the will of our heavenly Father, will be saved; while all presumptuous hardened sinners will bear the vengeance of offended justice for ever and ever.

Awhile I would have pass'd for well,
And strove my spots to hide;
Till it broke out incurable;
Too plain to be deny'd.

THE LEPROSY.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Miriam was leprous, struck by heaven,
And seven days from the camp was driven;
But Moses for the dame implor'd,
And she to health was soon restor'd.

MANKIND in the early ages of the world, were afflicted with a very sore and loathsome disease called the leprosy, a complaint, through mercy, but little known in our days. It was often inflicted as a punishment for sin; so it was when Miriam offended against her brother Moses. (Numbers xii. 10.) And when Gehazi attempted to deceive his master Elisha, (2 Kings v. 27.) and when king Uzziah invaded the priest's office, (2 Chron. xxiv. 19.) the way in which the Almighty made known his displeasure, was by visiting them with the leprosy. It was the province of the

priest to examine the person suspected of having the disease, and if the symptoms agreed with those which God had made known, as proving the leprosy, the leper was required to acknowledge his infirmity, and to cry "*unclean, unclean!*" His clothes were rent, he was cut off from all society, and from the house of God, till the disease was removed. Such loathsome disease has sin made our perishing bodies liable to, that they may well be called vile bodies, and lead us to look forward to that day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption. (1 Cor. xv. 53.) But the leprosy was a complaint intended to represent the defilement of man by sin. The leper was to be brought to the priest, so likewise must poor sinners be brought to our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ; and *in this* we have the advantage over the

lepers of those days: their priest could only decide whether the disorder really existed, while our blessed Saviour can heal the leprous soul, however greatly defiled; for there is no case too difficult for him to cure; no sin so desperate but he can eradicate it, for "*His blood cleanses from all sin.*" (1 John i. 7.) Not more reason had the poor leper to cry "*unclean, unclean,*" as regards his diseased body, than we have, as regards our polluted hearts, for the leprosy is deep within, and we are so completely defiled, that the prophet exclaimed, "*we are all as an unclean thing;*" (Isaiah lxiv. 6.) and the more we know of our hearts, the more we shall discover of our spiritual disease; but we are not left to despair, for there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah xiii. 1.) To him, and to him alone, can we go with

our disease, and we are certainly welcome, for he has said, "*Come unto me,*" (Matthew xi. 28.) and we shall find him as able and as willing to cure us, as he was the leper that applied to him in the days of his flesh. "*When Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; and there came a leper, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*" (Matthew viii. 2.) O what mercy to have such a physician to go to with all our spiritual sickness. In every fresh view we take of Christ, how suited, how seasonable, how all-sufficient a Saviour does he appear! May we love him more and more, and daily and hourly depend upon *him for* spiritual health, life, and salvation.

LEVITICUS XVI.

The scape goat on his head,
The Peoples Trespass bore;
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

THE High Priest, once in a year, was to make an atonement for all the people. There was a lamb offered morning and evening continually, (Exodus xxix. 38.) and there were sacrifices appointed for various offences; but one day in the year was to be set apart for a special atonement, the circumstances of which were as follow: Aaron was not to put on his rich priestly garments, but a meaner dress of linen, for it was a day of humiliation—he was to offer a bullock for himself and his house—two goats were to be provided by the people: upon these Aaron was to cast lots, to see

which should be slain, and which should be the scape-goat. The goat upon which the lot fell to be sacrificed, was then to be offered for sin-offering—the other was to be presented before the Lord. Aaron was to lay his hands on the head of the animal, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people, thus transferring them as it were, to the goat, which was then to be sent away into the wilderness, and allowed to live. Aaron was also to take fire on his censer, and enter into the holy place, and burn incense, the smoke of which was to cover the mercy-seat, where he was also to sprinkle blood before the Lord—at the same time the people were also required to rest from work, and afflict their souls for their sins. The duties of this day devolved upon Aaron, no one else was to be employed on this solemn occasion. We may

here observe, that on that great day of atonement, when Christ satisfied divine justice, he stood alone; none could bear any part in that great undertaking, and we have reason to bless God that our great High Priest was competent to the mighty work which he took in hand. The two goats brought by the people were intended as their sin-offering, one of which was slain as a satisfaction to divine justice, and the other being sent away, was a token of the removing away the sins of the people. This surely reminds us of our blessed Redeemer: "*who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;* " (1 Peter ii. 24.) there he bled, there he died for us men and our salvation: he rose again for our justification, and has borne away his people's sins for ever, which was typified by the scape-goat being sent away into a land

not inhabited. The High Priest entered the holy place with sweet incense and with blood, and thus has Christ entered heaven; with his own precious blood he pleads on our behalf, and his intercession is the sweet incense which ever rises to the mercy-seat above. This solemn service was repeated year by year, but Christ by his "*one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.*" (Heb. x. 14.) To this all-sufficient sacrifice may we ever look; and while, like the Israelites, we may well afflict our souls for our sins, may we also have faith in the atonement of our Redeemer, and rejoice in his finished salvation. "*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*" (Heb. x. 22.)

On Zion, his most holy hill,
God does a feast prepare,
And Israel's sons gentiles still,
Shall in the Banquet share.

SUNDRY FEASTS.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

No feasts, nor blood on altars spilt,
Can cleanse the souls of men from guilt:
But God has set before our eyes
An all-sufficient sacrifice.

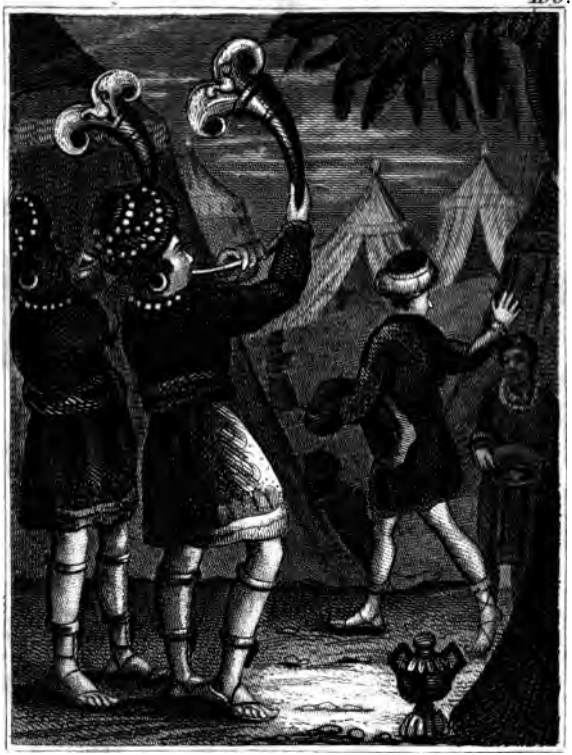
THE Almighty condescended to appoint various institutions which he saw fit to be observed by his special people, the Israelites; not only their sacrifices, but their feasts also, of which we have an account in Lev. xxiii. But previous to their being informed how to observe these festivals, they were again reminded of the necessity of carefully observing the Sabbath, thereby showing that God considered that day superior to all others: often had he reminded them of the importance of keeping it holy, and in his sacred word we are again and again called upon to be careful to pay due attention to that day, with many sweet en-

couraging promises to those who are found worshippers in the Lord's house at that season. God has said—"*Where my name is recorded, I will come unto you, and bless you,*" (Exodus xx. 24) and "*I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.*" (Isaiah lvi. 7.) David, though a king, could say, "*I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" (Psalm lxxxiv. 10.) O then beware of Sabbath-breaking, for it is the inlet to every other sin, and many have had reason to mourn at the last, over abused, misspent Sabbath-days; whereas God has promised his blessing to those who do not profane that holy day, but delight in seeking his glory, rather than spend it in worldly occupation or pleasure. (Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.)

There were three great feasts appointed, in which all the males were to appear be-

fore the Lord.—The first was the passover, which had reference to their deliverance from Egypt, and of which notice has before been taken. (Exodus xii.) At this feast, when they arrived in Canaan; where they would grow and reap corn, for now they were living upon manna, they were to bring a sheaf of the first-ripe corn to the priest, for an offering to God. The first of every thing should be the Lord's:—what a call is this to the young to devote their earliest and best days to Him to whom they owe every thing, and who will not despise the meanest endeavour to serve him, and to promote his glory. The next feast they were to observe was that of Pentecost, which was fifty days after the passover, and was the end of their harvest: as they brought the first ripe-corn to God then, so now they were to bring two loaves as an acknow-

ledgment of his watchful goodness over them in allowing them to complete their harvest; and thus may we ever give him the praise for all his mercies vouchsafed to us. This feast was appointed to keep in remembrance the giving of the law, fifty days after the deliverance from Egypt; and at this feast the Holy Spirit was poured out, as we read in Acts ii., which was fifty days after Christ's death. The third feast was that of Tabernacles, during which time, seven days, the men dwelt in booths made of the branches of trees, and when they came to the land of promise, this would remind them of the humble state they lived in, when they dwelt in tents in the wilderness; and thus calling to mind their once mean and desolate state, they would be induced to bless God for the gracious circumstances *into* which his providence had brought them.



Blow ye the Trumpet, Blow;
Let all the People know,
The year of Jubilee is come,
Return to your possessions home.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Let all the nations hear
  The joyful solemn sound,
This is the Jubilee year,
  To the earth's remotest bound:

THE instructions God was pleased to give to his people, had a particular reference to, and could only be acted upon when they came into the land of Canaan. When they arrived there, they were to allow their land and vineyards to rest every seventh year, neither sowing the one, nor pruning the other; but to live on the produce of the sixth year, which the Lord would make abundant; this would teach them their dependence on him, and his ability to feed them at all times. If they sowed the land, it was his rain and sun that brought it to perfection, and if they did not sow, he could

still supply them. We ought always to be sensible of our great obligations to God, and of our entire dependence on his providence. The people were also to observe a jubilee every fiftieth year, when the trumpet was to be sounded, and liberty proclaimed throughout the land. Every man who had parted with his possessions then returned to the enjoyment of them again, and every one who had engaged himself as a servant, returned to his family. This secured to the people their rights, both of freedom and property, for whatever might compel them to part with these blessings, there was a year of release when they must be restored;—herein provision was made that no family should be sunk in perpetual poverty, nor any one become too rich to the disadvantage of others.

The jubilee, or year of release, was a strik-

ing representation of gospel times, to which the prophet Isaiah alluded, when he was looking forward to the ministry of our blessed Saviour, where he speaks of Christ thus—"*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*" (Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.) This we are convinced relates to the Redeemer, for in Luke iv. 18, we find Christ using the same words when preaching salvation to perishing sinners. It must have been a rejoicing sound to those who were poor from the sale of their property, or had lost their freedom, when the jubilee trumpet was blown, and proclaimed their release and the restoration of their

estates; but after all it was only a temporary blessing; now the trumpet of the gospel sounds, now the slaves of sin and Satan are invited to return to him who gives rest to weary souls; now they may become the Lord's freemen, and enjoy all the blessings and privileges that the gospel affords:—and beyond this present life there is a rest remaining for the people of God; (Heb. iv. 9.) the glorious day is coming when the archangel's trumpet shall sound; then they will be delivered from the bondage of the grave, and enter that eternal inheritance which can never be taken from them. May we have grace to listen savingly to the gospel sound, that when the last trumpet shall wake the dead from their long sleep, we may hear it with rapture, and enter into the joy of the Lord.

God fed them with a lib'ral hand,
And sent them quails like dust or sand;
He gave them all their own desire,
And with the flesh they each retire

QUAILS SENT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Now from the sea a wind prevails,
And like a cloud descends the quails,
While hovering o'er the camp around,
And instant covers all the ground.

WE are informed that the Israelites having removed from the wilderness of Sinai to the wilderness of Paran, offended God by complaints; but it is not said of what they complained, and indeed it is difficult to conceive what reason they had to find fault, for they were fed and protected without any charge or trouble, and God was in the midst of them for their good; and although we are not told at what they repined, yet the all-seeing God, who knows the secrets of the heart, discovered their offence, and in just judgment consumed some of them by fire. A complaining spirit is very hateful in the sight of Him whose tender mercies are

over all his works, and what we christians should ever watch against. At the entreaty of Moses, the anger of the Lord was turned away, but in a very short time their sinful conduct roused it again; for the mixed multitude that were among the people fell alusting after flesh, and were joined by the Lord's people; who complained of the manna, with which they were so kindly fed, and wanted other food instead thereof. The mixed multitude consisted of persons who left Egypt with the Israelites, in hopes of mending their circumstances, by following the people for whom they had seen such wonders wrought:—from them the people got much harm; this should teach us to be very careful with whom we associate; bad company ruins many, and is at all times to be avoided; for our souls are more likely to be hurt by such, than,

they are to be benefited by us. "*Evil communications corrupt good manners.*" For this fresh instance of rebellion, God was greatly displeased, and Moses began to complain of the burden which the people were to him, because of the vexation they gave him; by which he was thrown into such a state of agitation as to act quite contrary to his usual way;—he appeared discontented, and when God promised to give the people flesh, he seemed to feel distrust as to the probability of that being accomplished, and was ready to call in question how it could be done. This was a failing, and shows that the best of men are liable to fall; and the improvement we should make thereof, is to pray for God's keeping grace. The Lord, to prove that he could provide flesh for them, sent forth a wind which brought abundance of quails

from the sea, called in Psalm lxxviii. 27, feathered fowls, and let them fall so plenteously about the camp, that the people gathered enough to supply their wants: but while the food was in their mouths the displeasure of the Lord fell upon them, and slew many for their discontent. Now they found that manna, however plain the food, with a blessing, was better than flesh with a curse. "*The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this, they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.*" (Psalm lxviii, 31, 32.) May the Lord keep us from discontent and unholy desires; what we have may we enjoy with his blessing, and be thankful; resting assured that our heavenly Father chooses better for us than we possibly could, *if left* to our own depraved desires.

A Land of Corn, and Wine, and Oil,
Favor'd with God's peculiar smile;
Rivers of Milk and honey rise,
And all the Fruits of Paradise.

THE SPIES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

With golden cheeks the rich pomegranates shines,
And tempting grapes load each luxuriant vine;
Of these they with them a vast cluster bear,
Th'enormous weight two of the strongest share.

THE Israelites were now encamped in the wilderness of Paran, and Moses sent twelve men, one of each tribe, and rulers among them, to search the land of Canaan, and ascertain whether the people were strong or weak, few or many; whether the land was good or bad; and how the inhabitants lived, if in tents or strong holds. This commission the spies accomplished in forty days, and returned to the camp of Israel, bringing with them some grapes, pomegranates, and figs, as a sample of the fruits which grew in the good land they had been inspecting; the cluster of grapes was so large and heavy, that two of the spies carried

it on their shoulders upon a staff,—a striking confirmation of the account that God had given them of Canaan, as to its being a good and fruitful land. When the spies gave in their report to Moses and Aaron, though they all agreed in their account how plentiful the produce of the country was, yet ten out of the number endeavoured to dissuade the people from attempting to go up, because the inhabitants were strong, had great and walled cities, and had giants dwelling amongst them; but Caleb and Joshua, the other two spies, encouraged the Israelites to press forward, for as the Almighty had promised to give them Canaan, they were well persuaded that no human power could prevent their access, if they relied on His promise. To this the people gave no heed, but became so enraged and *rebellious*, that they talked of returning to

Egypt, and threatened to stone Caleb and Joshua. When they became thus desperate, the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle, and once more he threatened to cut them off for their awful misconduct, and but for the effectual fervent prayer of Moses, their great friend in every season of danger, who stood between God and the people, it seems probable that the solemn threat would have been executed. Moses again prevailed to save them from destruction, yet God declared that not one of the men who had seen his glories in Egypt, and in the wilderness, should reach the land of Canaan, but should wander forty years in the wilderness, where all above twenty years of age should die;—from this denunciation Caleb and Joshua were exempt, because they were faithful. To show that God would not depart from his word, he ordered them to

retreat towards the Red Sea, and the ten men who had brought up an evil report, were immediately smitten and died. And we find that all the men died in the wilderness, as the Almighty had threatened, "*For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord.*" (Joshua v. 6.) Learn from this awful narrative, the evil of sin, especially of unbelief; how it exposes men to God's wrath, and if persevered in, must prevent the sinner from reaching the heavenly Canaan of rest. In Caleb and Joshua we have an excellent example of holy determination; may we be enabled to resemble them in a faithful adherence to God and his cause, in spite of every enemy; then will the land of promise be our everlasting portion.

Then from the Lord a whirling flame,
Full on the censer-bearers came.
Sudden the five times fifty die,
And in one pile their bodies lie

KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

Some of the chief of Israel's race
To groundless discontent gave place;
Their hearts with pride and rancour swell,
And seek occasion to rebel.

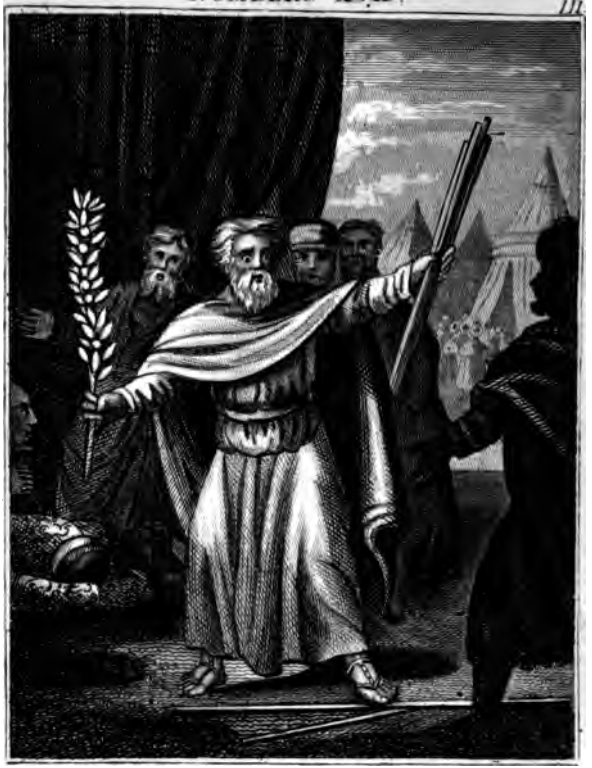
THE former rebellion, which the Almighty quelled, had its rise in the murmurings of the mixed multitude; but the one that soon after took place, was commenced by those who ought to have known better, and so far were more worthy of blame; for in proportion to our knowledge, so is our conduct more criminal, inasmuch as we sin against light. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, men of eminence among the tribes of Israel, excited a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, and drew into their interest two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly. The rebellious design was to object to the au-

thority of Moses, and to the settling of the priesthood exclusively upon Aaron and his family, by which they dared indirectly to speak against God himself, for both Moses and Aaron were appointed by him. When Moses heard the unjust charge which was brought by the rebels, he was willing to refer the case entirely to the Almighty, and directed them to take censers, and put fire therein with incense, and appear before the Lord on the following day, when Aaron should also appear with his censer; and then the Lord would show whom he chose to the priesthood. To this proposition Korah and the two hundred and fifty men who had joined him, agreed; but Dathan and Abiram refused to come up to the door of the tabernacle, but sent an insolent message, and charging Moses with having been their *enemy* in bringing them out of Egypt; that

his object was only to destroy them in the wilderness, or to rule over them as slaves. Never was a charge more unjustly made, for hitherto Moses had been most anxiously concerned for their welfare, and had often interceded for them when their rebellions had excited the divine displeasure. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the presence of all the people, and he commanded Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the multitude, that he might consume them in a moment, for the congregation had joined Korah against Moses and Aaron; but Moses and Aaron both fell on their faces and entreated the mercy of God for the assembly; who in answer to their prayer directed them to order the people to withdraw from those who were more immediately the rebels; thereby giving them an opportunity to save their lives; for God doth not

"*desire the death of a sinner,*" but gives him opportunity to turn from his evil way and live. Those that were wise withdrew from the tent of Korah accordingly, when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram and all that belonged to them: at the same time fire came out from the Lord, and destroyed Korah and the two hundred and fifty men who had burnt incense, while Aaron was preserved alive,—an evident sign that God had chosen him to the priesthood. O how awful a thing it is to provoke the living God to anger, for who can stand before his wrath? And blessed are all they who are enabled to avoid the company and ways of the ungodly, and to live continually in the fear of the Lord. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*" (Proverbs i. 7.)

NUMBERS XVII.



When in the People's wondering view,
Full of green leaves and blossoms too;
With heavy Fruit was Aaron's rod
And all the Nation own their God.

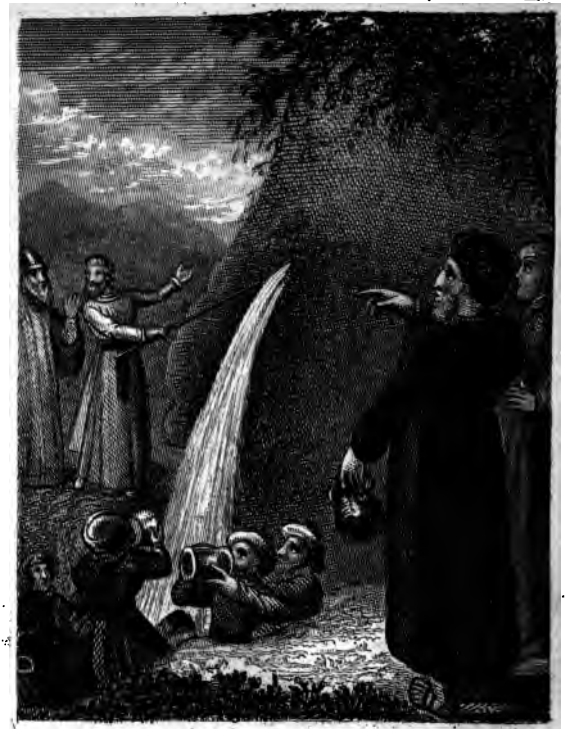
AARON'S ROD.

BEFORE CHRIST 1490 YEARS.

And now with one united voice
Applauding, they confirm the choice;
And say they will no more draw nigh
To touch the priesthood lest they die.

THE earth having swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, and their houses and all that appertained to them, the people fled at their cry, fearing lest the earth should swallow them up also. It is a dangerous thing to choose the ungodly as our companions, for we know not the evils we may involve ourselves in by so doing; at all events, God is never pleased with his people when they associate with the wicked. But though they were alarmed at the awful judgment that overtook the rebels, yet the very next day they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and charged them with having

and so silence all pretensions of others to that sacred office: he ordered every tribe to bring a rod, twelve in all, to Moses, who was to write the names of the tribes upon the rods, and Aaron's name on the rod of Levi; these were to be laid up in the tabernacle, and the Lord would make the rod of man whom he chose to be priest, to blossom; this was done, and on the morrow, when Moses looked on the rods, that of Aaron, for the house of Levi, had budded, blossomed, and yealded almonds; here was a positive evidence, and the people could no longer doubt the power of the Almighty; thus God will convince his enemies that what he does is right. May we be found with those who believe he does all things well, and may we thankfully acquiesce in all the appointments both of his providence and grace.



He from the Rock their thirst supplyʼd.
The gushing waters fell,
And ran in rivers by their side,
A constant miracle.

MOSES SMITES THE ROCK.

BEFORE CHRIST 1452 YEARS.

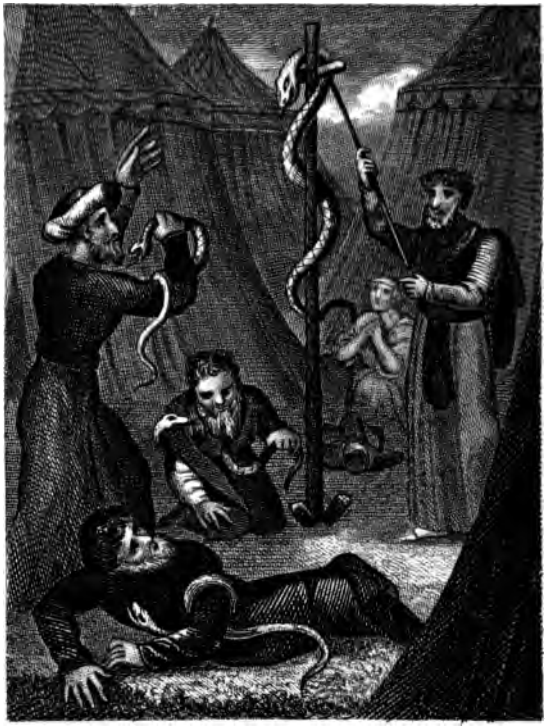
"Hear now, ye rebels! must ye hence receive
Miraculous streams, nor will ye yet believe?"
Then smote the rock; when from its flinty side,
Tumbling in loud cascades, fresh waters glide.

THE wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness was drawing towards a close. It was in the second year after they came out from Egypt, that they provoked God to "*declare in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest.*" (Psalm xcv. 11.) After many tedious marches and encampments, which occupied thirty-eight years, making forty in the whole since they left the house of bondage, we see them with their faces set again towards the land of Canaan. Very little account is given of the circumstances that occurred during this time; we only know that according to God's threatening

the men above twenty years old died in the wilderness; and now the children having seen their fathers cut off by degrees, were going to take possession of that land which their parents, by reason of their wickedness, were never permitted to see. Surely we may be led to hope that the children will not prove, like their forefathers, stubborn and rebellious; surely the solemn judgments executed upon them will prove an effectual warning to avoid sinning against the Almighty. Alas! we find that the children were like the parents, a faithless and perverse generation: for when they came to Kadesh and wanted water, they quarrelled with Moses and Aaron, and charged them with having been their enemies in bringing them out of Egypt; and instead of blessing God for having spared *their* lives, and brought them hitherto, they

dared to murmur at his reprieving mercy, wishing they had died with those whom he had cut off. Truly the heart of man is most deplorably wicked, and the patience of God is infinite; for instead of making these sinners who trod in their father's steps, suffer as they had done, he gave them water to supply their wants, which no doubt he would have given with his blessing, had they humbly prayed for it. The Lord commanded Moses to take his rod, and go with Aaron, and in the presence of the people speak to the rock, and it should supply water; but Moses and Aaron were angry with the people, and said unto them, "*Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out.*" (Numbers xx. 10, 11.) Herein was disobedience; God com-

manded them to speak to the rock, but Moses smote it in anger, and did not glorify God, for he seemed to doubt whether water would flow if he only spake to the rock; this offence was so great in the sight of God, that he declared for this sin, neither Moses nor Aaron should lead his people into Canaan. We may be sure God would not have been angry with his servants without a cause; and his dealing so severely with them, is a proof how hateful sin is to Him, and that he will not suffer it without punishment; but blessed be his Holy Name, that while sin must be our ruin, if he enters into judgment with us, yet he has provided a surety for his people in his Son Jesus Christ, who has borne all their iniquities, so that they shall not be excluded the heavenly Canaan.



When Israels grieving tribes complaind;
With fiery serpents greatly paind,
A serpent strait the prophet made,
Of molten brass to view displayd.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

BEFORE CHRIST 1452 YEARS.

To angry Heaven he for the people prays,
Which bids Moses a brazen serpent raise
High in mid-air, which speedy ease should give,
And all the wounded host who look'd should live.

SOON after Moses and Aaron had been informed that for their misconduct in not glorifying the Lord before the people, they should not enter Canaan. Aaron died on Mount Hor, and the people mourned for him thirty days. Eleazar, his son, succeeded him in the priesthood. Happily for Aaron it was only an earthly land of promise that his sin excluded him from; but if we are found impenitent sinners, we all shall be eternally shut out from a better place, even heaven. Aaron died, for the Jewish high-priest was but a man, a sinful man; but our great high-priest, Jesus Christ, ever lives, and continually appears in the presence of God

for us. (Hebrews ix. 24.) Not long after the death of Aaron, the Israelites were attacked by king Arad the Canaanite, who made some prisoners; but the Lord's people having called upon him, he delivered their enemies into their hands. This, it might have been expected, would have excited lasting gratitude and devotedness to God; but they soon forgot this signal mercy, and again murmured, exceeding, if possible, their former wickedness, for it is said they spake against God, and against Moses; hitherto they had in general murmured, indirectly at God, but now to his face; they complained that there was neither bread nor water, nothing but manna, which though rained from heaven, they loathed. For this impious rebellion, the Lord punished them in a peculiar manner; he sent *fiery* serpents among them, from whose bite *many* died. O how various are the way

that the Almighty can punish sinners, there is not a thing in creation but what he can make use of as an instrument by which to chastise those that offend against him. When the people felt the punishment thus inflicted, they came to Moses acknowledging their sins, and entreating him to pray to God for the removal of the serpents. It is a mercy when afflictions makes us sensible of our sins; God can bring all his creatures to his footstool, either in judgment or mercy. Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord directed him to make a brazen serpent, and to set it on a high pole, that the people who were bitten might look at it, and in looking might be healed; Moses obeyed the Lord's command, and the people who looked up to it recovered. Thus God showed how willing he was to hear their cry, and turn from his anger when they were sensible of their crime. But we

must consider this brazen serpent as one of the most significant types of Christ which we read of, and we are authorized so to view it by our blessed Saviour's own words in John iii. 14, 15, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*" To the wounded Israelite how welcome would the brazen serpent be! with eager eyes he would look to this only remedy, for there was no other way of escaping death, and it was so elevated that all might see it. Thus to the sin-diseased soul, how welcome will Christ the only Saviour be! To the cross he will gladly turn his eyes; there he may look, for he his welcome; and there is no other way of salvation. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (John iii. 16.)

On the poor brute in wrath he goes,
And loads his hide with heavy blows,
When the dull ass the silence broke,
And to his angry lord twice spoke.

BALAAM REPROVED BY HIS ASS.

BEFORE CHRIST 1452 YEARS.

The wages of unrighteousness he chose,
But see a mighty angel him oppose:
His ass at first the shining form espied,
And started oft, and oft he turn'd aside.

THE people having recovered from the effects which the fiery serpents produced among them, they set forward again towards the land of Canaan, where, had it not been for their father's disobedience, they might have been safely settled long before. When they approached the land of the Amorites, Moses sent a message to Sihon, king of the Amorites, requesting permission for the Israelites to pass through his land, which he not only refused, but with his people came out to war against them, which cost him his life and the loss of his country, for the Lord delivered both into the hands of the Israelites. Not intimidated at this re-

sult, Og, the king of Bashan, next attacked them; he shared the same fate, and his land was forfeited. Thus we see there were enemies in the way to Canaan, and God's people have always found enemies in their way to the heavenly land of rest to which they are bound; but as surely as the Israelites were enabled to conquer all that opposed them, so shall the true Christian triumph over every foe, through the grace of his heavenly Father. When these enemies were removed, the people went onward, and pitched in the plains of Moab; but when Balak, the king of Moab saw them, he was greatly afraid, for he knew what had befallen the Amorites, and expected to experience the same fate; he therefore sent to Balaam, the son of Beor, who lived at some considerable distance, and who was considered by Balak as a prophet, to come and curse the Israelites, not

doubting but that if he cursed them, they would be cursed indeed; to this message Balaam would return no answer till he had received commands from the Almighty, who was pleased to forbid him going to curse a people whom he had blessed. With this answer the messengers returned to the king of Moab, who sent others to press Balaam to come, begging him to let nothing prove a hinderance, and that he would promote him to great honour; this proved a great temptation, and though God had positively forbidden him to go, he ventured to ask again, in hopes that he might have permission, for being a false prophet he "*loved the wages of unrighteousness.*" (2 Peter ii. 15.) To this second request for leave to accompany the messengers, he was told he might go, that is, if he chose to disobey the Divine command already given him; he took ad-

vantage of this seeming permission, and gladly set out on his errand; but the Lord was angry with him, and sent his angel to oppose him, but his eyes were blinded that he could not see him. "*And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and the sword drawn in his hand, and the ass turned aside out of the way,*" (Numbers xxii. 23.) for which Balaam smote the beast thrice, when the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, who reproved Balaam for smiting her, and then the prophet's eyes were opened so as to see the angel with a sword in his hand, who told him that had not the ass turned out of the way, he would have smitten him and saved the beast. Now Balaam seemed sorry for having disobeyed the divine command, and inclined to return if ordered; but we find *his heart* was so set upon a reward, that he *was more* willing to go to Balak than return

On an high mountain by a woo
The monarch and the prophet stoo
From whence full on the wandering e
Israel's fair tents in prospect li

BALAAM'S PROPHECIES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1452 YEARS.

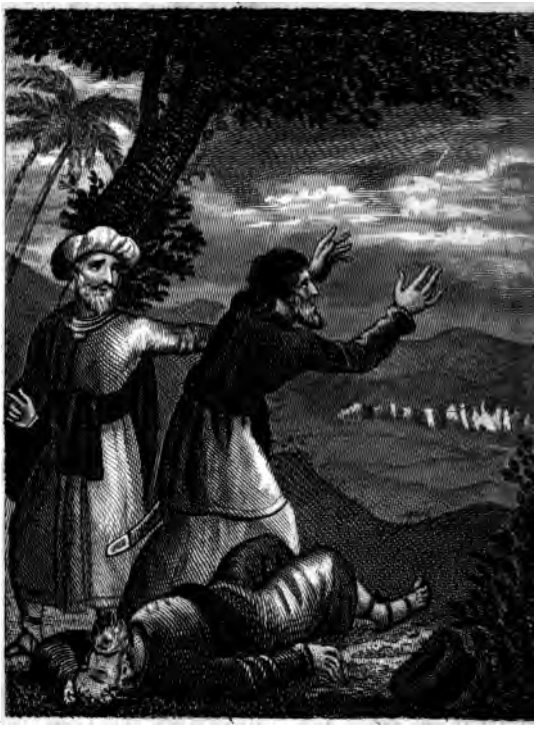
The monarch takes his prophet guest,
When thus the sire the king address'd;
"On this ascent seven altars raise,
And to the God of Heaven shall blaze."

THE angel of the Lord, not having compelled Balaam to retrace his steps, but on the contrary allowed him to proceed as his heart was bent upon it, he gladly hastened on to the object he had in view; and on arriving at the end of his journey, he was met by Balak, the king of Moab, who rebuked him for not coming when he was first sent to, seeing it was in his power to do great things for the prophet. Alas! how many have been ruined in the attainment of high honour and great riches; such are baits which the devil makes use of to draw men off from the fear of God, and the care

of their immortal souls; and for the obtaining of which, many have been willing to part with reputation and peace of mind in this life, and the enjoyment of heaven hereafter: this should lead us to pray for grace, by which we may be preserved from the love of any thing that may prove injurious to our souls. But of what use was Balak's earnest message, or Balaam's glad acquiescence in his wishes? for when he arrived he could not curse the people, but on the contrary was constrained against his will, to bless them; so completely has the Lord all hearts in his hands, and can cause the base designs of man turn to his own glory. Never were sweeter things said of any nation, than this false prophet now said of the people of Israel; even their enemy could see their happy lot, while they themselves were often murmuring against their God. Balak hav-

ing built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on each, Balaam retired to meet God, who gave him instructions what to say; and when he returned to Balak, his language was, "*How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*" (Numbers xxiii. 8—10.) This fretted Balak, and he took Balaam to another spot from whence he might see the Israelites, if he would curse them from thence; but his expectations were foiled, for glorious things were now spoken both of Israel, and of Israel's God. Even this disappointment did not deter Balak from trying one more effort to attain his end; he therefore took the prophet to a third place, to see if he should succeed any better, but this also proved in

vain. On seeing this, his anger was kindled, and he smote his hands together, expressed his great vexation, and bid Balaam return home to his country, for he perceived that the Lord had kept him back from honour. Thus was Balaam kept from cursing the Lord's people, and shown how much wiser he had been to have obeyed the Lord's commands, and stayed in his own land; and Balak was taught the great folly of endeavouring to injure those whom the Lord blessed. O how happy are they that have God for their friend! not any of the wicked designs of their enemies can prevail against them, and then it shall be for his glory, their good, and their enemies disgrace. We need not fear the curse of any, no, not of Satan himself, if the Lord be on our side.



How can a burden'd creature rise,
Ah! Lord direct my wishful eyes,
Extend thy Mercy let me see,
The City of Refuge clos'd on me

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

BEFORE CHRIST 1452 YEARS.

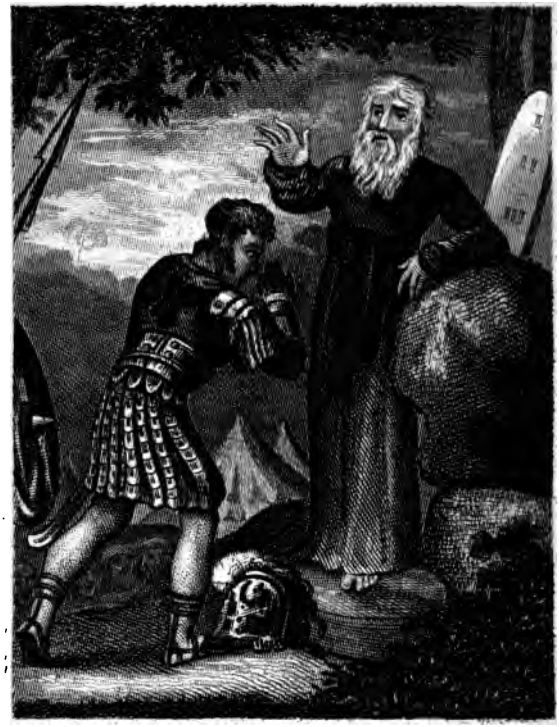
Other refuge we have none,
Thou, the city where we flee,
Leave, ah! leave us not alone,
All our safety rests on thee.

AFTER the deluge, one of the first commands of the Almighty was against murder, as we read in Genesis ix. 6, and this was renewed in the law given on Mount Sinai, "*Thou shalt do no murder.*" It is a crime of great magnitude in the sight of the Lord, and what he has directed shall not be atoned for but by the death of the murderer. Our blessed Redeemer in his sermon on the Mount, in Matt. v. 22, has shown that not only he who slays his fellow-creature, but he who is angry with him without a cause, is in danger of the judgment; for anger unrestrained might lead to the actual commission of the crime, and if it is not per-

mitted to go to that length, yet in the eyes of an all-seeing God, the thoughts and desires of the heart are seen as plain as actions, and have as much of sin in them. If anger is so offensive to God, and if we by nature are so prone to offend in this particular, surely we cannot do better than pray God to bless us with grace, "*to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice;*" and to teach us to "*be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.*" Eph. iv. 31, 32. And as St. Paul sweetly speaks in Romans xii. 10, "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.*" If we are enabled so to act, sweet peace of mind and loving-kindness will mark our life and conduct, whereby we shall be blessed, and become a real blessing and comfort to those about us. But it is

not every one who slays his fellow-creature that is guilty of murder; one man may kill another by accident; and for the safety of persons who should be so unfortunate as to take the life of a fellow-creature without intention, the Cities of Refuge were to be appointed, that if the manslayer might flee there, and be sheltered from the avenger of blood. Six cities were to be appropriated for the reception and security of such persons, and these cities were so situated in different parts of the country, that the manslayer might reach one of them in a few hours after the commission of the act. As we have already remarked, that most of the appointments in ancient times had reference to Jesus Christ, that through the types and figures used in the scriptures, the people are to look forward, by faith, to him; so in the Cities of Refuge we may observe the allusion to Christ; indeed, the apostle Paul,

in Heb. vi. 18, speaks of our flying for refuge to the Saviour, who is the hope set before us. There was no place of security to the manslayer but the City of Refuge; so there is no place of real safety for the sinner, but in Christ Jesus. If he neglected to fly to one of the cities, he was liable to be destroyed by the avenger of blood; and if we neglect the only place of security for our souls, even in Jesus, how shall we escape everlasting ruin to our immortal souls? As the manslayer was safe only in one of the appointed places, so alone can we be safe in the blessed Redeemer, who is the hiding-place and refuge of all who seek him. To this blessed Saviour, the Son of God, "*who taketh away the sins of the world,*" therefore let us go, with humble hope and confidence, and we shall *find our* souls safe in his hands for time and *eternity*.



The man of God before he dyd,
That Israel's tribes might be supplyd,
On warlike Joshua laid his hands,
And gave the people his commands.

MOSES ENCOURAGES JOSHUA.

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

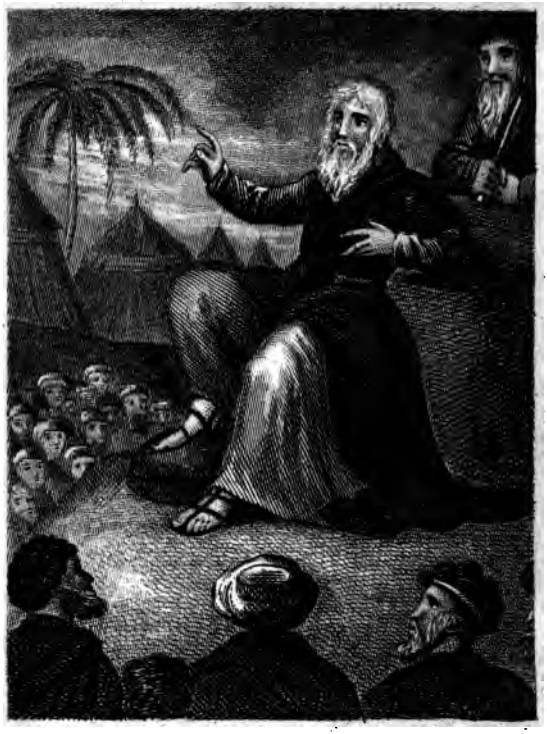
Great blessings, Israel, are thy share,
Thou, object of Jehovah's care!
Like a broad shield he will defend!
He is thy Great Eternal Friend.

THE Book of Deuteronomy is chiefly a repetition of the circumstances and events that had occurred to the people of Israel since their departure out of Egypt, in which Moses fully sets before them their own faults, and the many offences of their forefathers; at the same time pointing out to them all the mercies of God which had attended them during their long wandering in the wilderness. Very sweet is his address to them in chapter viii. 2, &c.—"*And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness; he fed thee with manna*; thy raiment waxed

not old upon thee, nor did thy foot swell these forty years ; as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee ; therefore thou shalt keep his commandments, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." It is good to remember the way in which our gracious God has led us all our life long ; we shall be sure to find enough to praise him for ; when we consider how often we have sinned against him, we must admire his patience, and when we call to mind how kindly and wisely he has arranged every thing for us, we have reason to say that "*goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives,*" Psal. xxiii. In the 29th chapter Moses gives the people very solemn warning as to what would be the consequence of forsaking God, and shows them the awful judgments that would ensue; and he had too much reason to believe that they

would prove rebellious still, when he called to mind their past offences. In the 30th chapter he shows them that there is forgiveness with God, for those who turn to him with sincere repentance, however far their sins may have driven them from his gracious favour. It is a dreadful thing to forfeit the favour of God by sin, yet it is a great mercy that none who feel unfeigned sorrow for their crimes but his arms of mercy are ever open to receive them: not that his being so gracious should lead any to trifle with him, for if they do, he may cut them off in their sins, and leave them to perish. In the 31st chapter, Moses thus addresses the people, "*I am one hundred and twenty years old this day, I can no more go out and come in.*" His work was almost done, his time was nearly closed, but he called Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, "*Be*

strong and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it; the Lord doth go before thee, he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." This was encouraging to Joshua, and pleasing to the people; their old leader and friend was going to leave them by death; but a new guide and captain was raised up on their behalf. Christians ought to be very thankful to Almighty God, that when he is pleased to call his faithful ministers of the gospel home to glory, others are raised up to fill their places, by whom his people are instructed, and his blessed work is carried on in the world and in the church.



The Prophet ere he leaves his charge;
Calls all the people and at large,
To give his last advice proceeds,
And tells Jehovah's dreadful deeds.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

BEFORE CHRIST 1451 YEARS.

With all his might the prophet tries
To teach the people to be wise
And in his own triumphant lays
The prophet sings Jehovah's praise.

MOSES, in Deuteronomy, chap. xxxi. 14, is informed that the days approach in which he must die, and at the same time the Lord shows him how awfully the people would transgress after his death, by forsaking God and worshipping other gods, which would end in his forsaking them. It is sin, and only sin, which causes the Almighty to forsake his creatures: it is what his soul hateth, and if unrepented of, will certainly be the ruin of all who love it, and live in the practice of it. That the people might have fair warning of the dreadful consequences of forgetting the true God of Is-

rael, Moses is directed to write them a song, in which to set forth the punishment of revolt from their Maker, that it might be a witness against them, if ever they should leave his worship; this Moses performed, and in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, it stands upon record, and is one of the finest pieces of sacred composition; in which the mercies the children of Israel had been indulged with, and the tender care that God had manifested towards them, ever since he took them out of the house of bondage, are strikingly noticed; their revolt and the certain ruin that would follow, are also clearly stated; so that when they did forsake God, there was no excuse for them. It is a great blessing that the word of God contains, not only every gracious promise needful for our *enc*ouragement while passing through life,

but every necessary admonition and solemn warning also; may we therefore make the sacred volume our constant study, and then we shall ever find it *"a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path."* Psalm cxix. 105. When Moses had spoken all the words of this song unto the people, he received a command from God to go up into mount Nebo, and die; but before his departure he his permitted to pronounce a blessing on each tribe, when he prays for them, and prophesies concerning them; beginning with Reuben, who was the eldest, then Judah, next Levi, then Benjamin, next Joseph, of whom he speaks very strikingly, alluding to the head of that tribe having been once so cruelly separated from his brethren by their selling him: then he blesses the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, afterwards Gad, then Dan,

Naphtali, and Asher; and he concludes all the sweet things that he says of the tribes with these glorious words, "*Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?* Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29. Never were a people more highly blessed than the Jewish nation; for the Lord was in the midst of them to guide and keep them. It is God's presence and favour that can alone make us blessed, while passing through this life; and if we possess that, we may the more easily bear all the trials that we meet with by the way. May the gracious God of Israel be our God; may we be preserved by him from every sin and snare; may his grace be our portion in this world, and glory our future inheritance in the countless ages of eternity, for the blessed Redeemer's sake.